Najdi and Hijazi Dialects: The Formation in Progress of a Saudi Koine

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الملخص

تقدم هذه الورقة دراسة استكشافيه في محاولة لفهم الوضع اللغوي في المملكة العربية السعودية وأيضا لاختبار فرضية ظهور لهجة سعودية معيارية (عامة). بداية، من المهم جدا الإشارة الى أن الأدبيات اظهرت أن اللهجات السعودية تقع حاليا تحت وطأة التغير كنتيجة للتغير لاجتماعي والاقتصادي الكبير الذي يحدث في المملكة العربية السعودية منذ عام ١٩٧٠، وقد وُصِفت هذه التغيرات بالتفصيل في مقال الهذلول وايدادان (١٩٩٣). وحول طريقة الدراسة فقد جُمعت بيانات هذا البحث من الإعلام وبالتحديد من ستة وعشرين إعلاناً تلفزيونياً وتم التحقق من عدد من المتغيرات اللغوية وهي كالتالي: الصوتان الصائتان المتصلان [او] و [اي]، الأصوات اللثوية [ث] و [ذ] و [ظ] وما يقابلها من أصوات انفجارية [ت] و [د] و [ض]، أيضاً صوت الجيم المعطشة [دج] وغير المعطشة [ج]، بالإضافة الى متباينات صوت (ك) وهي [ك] و [تس] و [س] و [تش] و[ش]، وأخيرا الصوت النادر للمتغير (ك) وهو [ث]. وبناء على ما تقدم تفترض هذه الدراسة نشوء لهجة سعودية معيارية ذات قطبين حيث يظهر عليها تأثير اللهجتين النجدية والحجازية وهو مشابه لما وُجد في دراسة الرجيعي (٢٠٢٠). الجدير بالذكر هنا أن نتائج هذا البحث الاستكشافي تُظهر أمراً ملفتاً وهو ظهور أثر اللهجة النجدية على اللهجة المحكية في الإعلانات أكثر من الأثر الحجازي إلا أنه، وفي ظل التغيرات الاجتماعية المستمرة والكبيرة، لا يمكن الى حينه التنبؤ بصفات اللهجة السعودية، بمعنى هل سيتفوق أثر الصفات اللغوية النجدية ويلغي الحجازية؟ ام أننا سنكون أمام لهجتين سعوديتين: نجدية وحجازية؟ ام أن لهجة سعودية مختلطة ستنشأ من اللهجتين؟

Abstract

This paper is an exploratory work which attempts to understand the linguistic situation in Saudi Arabia and to test the hypothesis of the emergence of a Saudi koine. To begin with, it is vital to mention that the literature shows that many Saudi dialects are presently in a state of change. This is due to tremendous social and financial changes taking place in the country starting from 1970. A detailed description of these changes is presented in Al-Hathloul and Edadan (1993). The data of the current study was collected from media, in particular, from 26 television advertisements. Several variants were investigated: diphthongs [aw] and [aj], interdentals [θ], [ð], [ð̄ˤ] and their stop counterparts [t], [d] and [ɖ], the affricate [dʒ] and the fricative [ʒ], the affricated and fricative variants of (k) [tʃ] and [ts] and [s] and [ʃ] respectively, and finally the palatalized variant of (k) [kʲ]. The results suggest that there is indeed an emergence of a Saudi koine, however, it is a double-sided koine, with influences from both Najdi and Hijazi dialects. These results go hand in hand with those presented by Al-Rojaie (2020). Another important result that this exploratory work demonstrates is that the use of the Najdi -influenced koine is clearly more prominent than the Hijazi one in the language of advertisements. Nevertheless, in light of the dramatic social change in the country, it is not possible to predict whether the Najdi koine will oust the Hijazi one or if both will continue as two pan-Saudi dialects or whether a mixed dialect will be formed.

Keywords: dialect change; Hijazi; koine; media; Najdi; social change

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The characteristic of variation is something ingrained in all spoken languages around the world and is stimulated by internal factors, such as position of feature in the word and the adjacent sounds, etc., and external factors, such as age, gender, and race, etc. The main theory about variation in the sociolinguistic field is that it is not random but rather it is structured as Labov (1963) found in his Martha's Vineyard study. However, this does not mean that the patterns of variation in all communities are similar. On the contrary, each community has its own characteristics and circumstances that shape the pattern of variation (Al-Wer et al., 2022), and the linguistic situation in Saudi Arabia is no exception. In fact, the situation in Saudi is slightly blurred; many Saudi dialects are not investigated, and the idea of having a Standard Saudi dialect or supra- local dialect has not yet been examined. In fact, the excessive and continuous internal immigration in the country could encourage the occurrence of koineization which often happens when mutual intelligible dialects come into contact. The present paper is intended to discern whether a koine has emerged in Saudi Arabia or not.

Recently, there have been a number of sociolinguistic studies conducted in different Saudi cities by some sociolinguists such as Al-Essa (2008) in Jeddah, Alghamdi (2014) in Mecca, Alqhtani (2015) in Abha, Al-Ammar (2017) in Ha'il, Hussain (2017) in Medina and Alaodini (2019) in Dammam. The results of these studies have shown that a change is in progress in the spoken dialects of these cities. They also reveal that there is an emergence of new koineized dialects in those cities where marked features are abandoned, and more neutral elements are being used. For instance, the affricated variant of (k) [ts] in feminine suffix *kita:bits* 'your book' (feminine singular) is replaced by the neutral velar stop [k] *kita:bik* 'your book'.

It is important to mention here that when it comes to laypersons, there is a general perception of the emergence of a common dialect termed with a non-scientific expression *al-lahjah al-beð̄ˤā* '(lit.) 'the white dialect', a dialect that has no regional linguistic markers which can be linguistically called a Saudi dialect or supra-local dialect. Al-Rojaie (2020) also confirms the prevalence of this expression among Saudi people. However, linguistically, this perception has not yet been tested. In order to scrutinize this public perception, the current study collected data from 26 television advertisements, and analyzed them based on a number of regional linguistic features namely, diphthongs [aw] and [ai], interdentals [θ], [ð], [ð̄ˤ] and their stop counterparts [t], [d] and [đ], the affricate [dʒ] and fricative [ʒ], the affricated and fricative variants of (k) [tʃ] and [ts] and [s] and [ʃ], respectively, and the palatalized variant of (k) as [kʲ]. This study is just a point of departure to conceptualize the linguistic situation in Saudi Arabia.

Literature Review

Koineization

Sociolinguists have come up with the common concept of koineization which is a linguistic phenomenon related not to a specific place but a universal linguistic situation that occurs when prolonged contact happens between mutually intelligible dialects (Siegel, 1985 and Trudgill 2004). People who speak these dialects work together and are aware from the start that they are using shared linguistic features and eliminating the different ones. Eventually, this turns into a habit that they are unaware of, resulting in the emergence of a new dialect or a

koine. Kerswill and Williams (2005) defined koineization as "... the type of language change that takes place when speakers of different, but mutually intelligible language varieties come together, and which may lead to a new dialect or koine formation." (Kerswill and Williams, p. 1023)

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that there are several linguistic phases that lead to the occurrence of a koine (Siegle, 1985; Trudgill, 2004). Firstly, mixing is one of the prominent phases where the existing linguistic features originate from different dialects. Another phase is called simplification which denotes the reduction of structural complexity. Reallocation is the phase where surviving features of mixed dialects are re-functionalized to have new social, stylistic, or linguistic functions in the emerging dialect. In the levelling phase, the marked features are reduced or eliminated by the speakers. The last phase is called focusing which is an advanced stage that is needed to move from a koineized dialect to a new-dialect formation. Some examples of research on koineization are presented below where some of these phases are illustrated.

Koineization in New Zealand. The emergence of New Zealand Modern English is a well-known example of koineization which overtime became a new-dialect formation. Trudgill (2004) investigated the formation of the new English dialect in New Zealand. He worked with colleagues on a large-scale project in which they detected the so-called Origins of New Zealand English (ONZE). They were fortunate to find old records of spoken English from thirty-four different locations in New Zealand. The recordings were of the first generation of children born to European settlers there.

Trudgill divided the process of new-dialect formation in New Zealand into three stages. The first stage encompassed initial contact that started between adult speakers who migrated from different regions of the British Isles (Ireland and Britain) carrying with them social and linguistic varieties. In this stage, accommodation was the main mechanism which resulted in rudimentary levelling and interdialectal development. In the second stage, the variability was extreme, and the levelling was obvious. Children were the main actors in this stage, so they were the reason behind the occurrence of this extreme variability. Children at this stage were exposed to different adult models and they had the freedom to select variants from different dialects. This means that the key mechanism in stage II was a "form of variable acquisition" (Trudgill, 2004: 103). In the third and final stage, the social situation was more stable, and the variants lessened since the forms of the minorities were lost. Children were still the crucial actors in this stage, but this time they dealt with fewer variants, and they simply selected the most common ones. Hence, the key attribute of the third stage was determinism.

Koineization in Amman, Jordan. Al-Wer (1991- present) started a large comprehensive project in 1991 in the capital city Amman, Jordan that is still continuing today. Amman is a relatively recent capital city that historically did not have either a native population or a traditional dialect. Therefore, Amman became an attractive city for immigrants. It has become a city of people from Palestine, Syria, and other parts of Jordan. This made Amman the perfect place for social and dialect contact, and hence, for new dialect formation. The cumulative research for Al-Wer was conducted to trace the koineization process in Amman and eventually the new dialect formation. She investigated the continuous change across three generations. The results obtained by Al-Wer (2013) demonstrated the following facts:

- The local features in Jordanian and Palestinian dialects were levelled out by the adults in the first generation. From the Jordanian side, the affrication of /k/ in front vowel

environment, and from the Palestinian dialect the raised realization of /a/, both were levelled out.

- The variability was extreme in the speech of the second generation. Linguistically, women behaved differently from men on both sides, Jordanian and Palestinian. The Jordanian men and the Palestinian women were the most conservative, and the opposite happened with the Jordanian women and Palestinian men; they were the innovators.
- The social meaning and the linguistic features started to gain stability. Al-Wer also found simplification and markedness occurring as the two phases of koineization in this stage.

Some Saudi sociolinguistic studies are presented below for a more extensive understanding of the topic of the present research. Researchers used dialect contact as a framework to investigate linguistic changes in several Saudi cities. These studies revealed almost the same findings which would help the author understand the general linguistic situation in Saudi Arabia and test the hypothesis of a Saudi koine emergence.

Sociolinguistic Studies in Saudi Arabia: Evidence of Levelling

Al-Essa (2008) conducted her research in Jeddah to examine sociolinguistic variation in the speech of Najdi immigrants. Najdi people had moved from the middle region of Saudi Arabia to dwell in Jeddah, the urban city in the west, where the Hijazi dialect is spoken. She investigated the use of some Najdi phonological and morphophonemic variants. The results of her research revealed that Najdi speakers preferred adopting more Hijazi variants by levelling out Najdi markers such as the affricated variants of (k) and (g) and the 2nd person feminine suffix [– ik]. One of the Hijazi dialect traits is a type of morphological simplification that occurs when using neutral variant to show gender distinction. Al-Essa found that Najdi immigrants adopted this neutral form and abandoned the complexity of the Najdi morphological system. The example below demonstrates the complexity in the Najdi morphological system

3rd masculine plural   ja:kl-**u:n** 'they eat'

3rd feminine plural   ja:kl-**in** 'they eat'

The analysis revealed that Najdi immigrants used the masculine suffix [– u:n] to refer to females and males.

On the other hand, Najdi speakers showed the opposite manner with the interdental variants [ð], [θ] and [ðˤ]; the rate of their usage of the Hijazi variants [d], [t] and [dˤ] was low and constrained by social factors such as age and social contact.

These results exhibit that levelling out local Najdi variants is the outcome of prolonged contact between Najdi and Jeddawi speakers.

The same findings occurred in a contact situation in Mecca. Alghamdi (2014) examined the change in the speech of Ghamdi immigrants who moved from Al-Baḥa, located in the southwest of Saudi Arabia, to settle in Mecca. Diphthongs (aw) and (aj) and interdentals (ð), (θ) and (ðˤ) were the examined variables; their Ghamdi variants are [aʊ] and [ai] and [ð], [θ] and [ðˤ] respectively. Their Meccan counterpart variants are [ɔː] and [ɛː] and [d], [t] and [dˤ] respectively.

As a result of dialect contact and long- term accommodation, Alghamdi found that Ghamdi speakers eliminated the diphthongs and replaced them with the Meccan monophthongs [ɔː] and [ɛː].

bait > baɛ: 'house'

laʊn > lɔ:n 'colour'

Alghamdi ascribed this pattern of change to the salience that diphthongs carried in Mecca especially in view of the fact that Ghamdi immigrants were a minority there. In fact, diphthongs are not prevalent variants among Saudi dialects as Prochazka (1988) has pointed out in his dialectology work in Saudi Arabia.

However, the case of the interdentals [ð], [θ] and [ðˤ] was opposite to those of the diphthongs. In general, the Ghamdi speakers maintained their interdentals, and their avoidance of the Meccan stops [d], [t] and [dˤ] was obvious. This result goes in parallel with Al-Essa (2008) as mentioned above. Al-Essa and Alghamdi findings present an evidence of language change in two urban cities, Jeddah and Mecca, that leads to a levelling out of local features and maintaining of neutral ones.

Alqhatani (2015) presented her sociolinguistic research from a different region of Saudi Arabia. She investigated the change in the Tihāmi Qaḥṭāni dialect (TQ). TQ is one of the spoken dialects in the province of ʿAsīr located in the southwest of Saudi Arabia.

Alqhtani investigated two linguistic variables. The first linguistic variable is phonological, the Arabic sound *dˤād*, which has two realizations, the emphatic voiced fricative-lateral sound [ɮˤ] – the local variant – and the emphatic interdental [ðˤ] – the variant of most Saudi dialects. The second variable is morpho-phonological, the definite article *m-*, which has two variants *m-* (the local variant) and *l-* (as in the standard Arabic and other Saudi varieties).

The results of Alqhtani's study revealed that the pattern of change was similar to other Saudi sociolinguistic studies. The young women speakers led the linguistic change, as they tended to abandon their local variants [ɮˤ] and the definite article *m-* in favor of the koineized or supra-local variants [ðˤ] and *l-* respectively in the spoken dialect in Abha. This is not surprising since the sociolinguistic literature shows many cases where women in various societies lead the change towards koineized features.

In the same vein, Hussain's sociolinguistic work in 2017 in Medina (one of the Hijazi cities in the western region of Saudi) examined the variation and change in two mutually intelligible spoken dialects which were in constant contact, namely, the urban Medini and the Bedouin Medini. She worked on two phonological variables: the variable (dʒ) which has two realizations, the affricate [dʒ] or the fricative [ʒ] and resyllabification as a result of syncope and epenthesis. For the purpose of this study, the author will only present the results of the first variable.

Hussain collected the data from two groups: the urban and the Bedouin descendants of Banū Masrūḥ (one of the Ḥarbi clans). Both groups have the variable (dʒ) with a voiced alveolar affricate [dʒ] realization in their linguistic dictionary. The results revealed that there was a change toward the deaffricated variant [ʒ] which is the innovative one. Hussain ascribed this change to two reasons: firstly, the [ʒ] was the most used feature in the spoken dialect of Jeddah and she assumed that urban Medinis who worked in Jeddah had brought this innovative variant back home with them. Secondly, the variant [ʒ] was the traditional sound in other Ḥarbi clans that were in regular contact with the target clan of her study, the Banū Masrūḥ. The emergence of the [ʒ] in both communities, urban and Bedouin, was obvious in the results.

It should be noted that both variants [dʒ] and [ʒ] are realized in different Saudi dialects, however, sometimes they exist in one dialect but with certain linguistic conditions.

Nevertheless, the results in Hussain's research showed that a koineized dialect in Medina had emerged.

In 2017, Al-Ammar conducted a sociolinguistic study for Ha'ili Arabic, which is a dialect spoken by sedentary Ha'ili people. Ha'il is the capital city of the northern region in Saudi Arabia. The city residents are from different tribes, while the villages and remote areas around the city were inhibited by nomads and rural people. However, the demographic population changed after oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia, and nomads and rural people immigrated to the city for better job opportunities and an easier lifestyle.

The Ha'ili Arabic dialect is one of the Najdi Arabic varieties as Ingham (1994) pointed out. Hence, it shares some of the Najdi dialect features, yet it retains some distinguishable ones. Al-Ammar examined the change and variation in two of those distinguishable features, namely, the raising of the feminine ending -*ah* and the lenition of the plural feminine ending -*a:t*. In the Ha'ili dialect the raising of the feminine ending -*ah* is unconditional in pausal position, and it becomes either [ɛ] or [e] (the lowered variant [a] is the supra-local one). The second variable, the plural feminine ending -*a:t,* is realized with the [t] sound (the innovative feature) while it is lenited in the Ha'ili dialect as [j] or [h].

Raising fem. ending   *θalaθah > θalaθeh* 'three'

Lenition fem. pl.   *wa:gfat > wa:gfa:j* 'they are standing'

The results of Al-Ammar's study illustrated that these two Ha'ili features, the raising of the feminine ending -*ah* and the lenition of the plural feminine ending -*a:t,* were undergoing change towards the innovative/ koineized variants. It is worth mentioning here that the innovative variants in Al-Ammar's work are the features of the spoken dialects in the urban cities in Saudi Arabia.

Alaodini conducted her sociolinguistic research in the Eastern region of Saudi Arabia, particularly in the capital city, Dammam. She provided the final version of this work in 2019. Alaodini investigated the changes and variation in the speech of *Dawāsir* immigrants in Dammam. She talked about their journey through Yemen, Najd, and Bahrain before finally settling in Dammam. She created a link between their long journey to different areas and the change it had on the *Dōsarī* dialect.

Alaodini examined the variation and change in two salient linguistic features (dʒ) which is realized as the alveo-palatal affricate [dʒ] (the supra-local feature) or the glide [j] (traditional *Dōssari* variant), and the realization of (ɑ:) in word-medial position as either the rounded [ɒ:] (the traditional *Dōssari* variant) or the unrounded [ɑ:].

The results of Alaodini's work revealed that traditional *Dōssari* features [j] and [ɒ:], the minority variants, were abandoned by *Dōssari* speakers; they preferred to use the supra-local/ koineized features [dʒ] and [ɑ:]. These results are in line with all the above-mentioned sociolinguistic studies in Saudi Arabia. The marked/ regional variants are levelled out to be replaced by the koineized variants.

To sum up, the studies above show that dialect contact has been taking place in various Saudi cities due to increasing mobility, growth of urban cities and economic changes. Researchers also provide us with crucial findings that there is a dialect change in progress and this change leads to one of the koineization phases known as levelling. Speakers are levelling out regional linguistic features from their speech to replace them with neutral variants. To

determine some of the neutral variants, the author started with presenting the social and linguistic development in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia: Social and Linguistic Development

The discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia occurred during the thirties of the last century. Yet, the Saudi population did not enjoy the fruits of this industry until the late sixties when ARAMCO, the largest oil company increased its production. "By 1962, we reached another milestone, with cumulative crude oil production reaching 5 billion barrels" (ARAMCO, 2022). The details of this journey are presented on the website of ARAMCO. As a result of that, the prosperity in the country influenced many aspects of life. For instance, job opportunities grew sharply in the main cities, individual income increased dramatically, and subsequently mobility expanded. People immigrated from small cities and villages to the main cities beginning with Mecca and Jeddah, and then later to Dammam and Riyadh to take advantage of the new lifestyle. These changes led to huge social and linguistic interaction between people who came from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

From the thirties until the fifties of the last century, Mecca and Jeddah had been the most attractive destinations for all Saudi immigrants for many reasons. 'Al-Raḥma:neyyah school', the first school in the kingdom was established in Mecca in 1912 (Seba:ʕi, 1984); and the first official radio broadcast named 'Etha:ʕat Makkah Al-Mokarramah' was launched in 1949 in Jeddah (Krayyim, 1982). Also, much of the population in these cities was educated. Mecca and Jeddah enjoy a comfortable social and economic situation since they are cosmopolitan cities. Mecca is the sacred city that receives millions of pilgrims every year and Jeddah is the Islamic port. These characteristics elevated the social power in these cities. People, culture and spoken dialects there became a symbol of civilization and modernization. Hence, people who immigrated to these cities were psychologically ready to immerse themselves in this new life and become members of society by various means, including adopting the hosts' linguistic behavior. The results of the previous studies (Al-Essa, 2008; Alghamdi, 2014) revealed that old participants (the first and second generation of immigrants) were the most influenced by the Hijazi culture, and they were more advanced in their use of Hijazi variants compared to other participants from the third generation. From old oral data of Alghamdi (2014), one of the older participants from the second generation, gave a thought-provoking comment about his life in Mecca after immigration, saying:

> Life in Hijaz is much better than in my homeland, it is easier, and everything is clean and tidy here not like my village. I really do not want to go back…. I just go for visiting in the holidays but not to live there anymore. Frankly saying, no I can't live there forever. (My translation, from one of the sociolinguistic interviews of Alghamdi, 2014)

الحياة في الحجاز أحسن بكثير من العيشة في القرية، أسهل وكل شيء نظيف ومرتب هنا مو زي القرية. حقيقي ما عاد أبغى أرجع..... أروح زيارة في الاجازات بس لا يمكن ارجع أعيش هناك. للأمانة ما أقدر أعيش هناك للأبد

However, in the early seventies and with the spread of education and the improvement of different aspects of life in other main cities, specifically Riyadh and Dammam, attention turned naturally to them, and the power of Mecca and Jeddah started to diminish. The immigration to Dammam and Riyadh gradually increased (Kim, 2021); whole families moved to dwell there. Furthermore, many young men enrolled at the main universities in Dammam and Riyadh, and

they eventually settled, worked, and raised families there. In addition, Riyadh as a capital city brought together all governmental sectors and ministry headquarters (Alahmadi & Atkinson, 2019) which, indeed, provided great job opportunities. Many well-known Najdi merchants (coming from different parts of Najd) settled in Riyadh and practiced their businesses there. And to complete the picture, it is important to mention that Riyadh is the homeland of the royal family which in turn makes it a prestigious place to live in. Further comprehensive details about these changes and the expansion of these urban cities are demonstrated in Alahmadi and Atkinson (2019) research. These social and financial changes undoubtedly reallocate the meaning of social power, modernization, and civilization. Now they are not only associated with Mecca and Jeddah, as in the thirties to fifties of the last century, but Riyadh and Dammam (especially Riyadh) are having the biggest share of these meanings. Consequently, the Najdi culture and dialect competed with the Hijazi ones which affected the immigrants' social and linguistic attitudes.

The field of sociolinguistics is served well by a rich literature that presents language change as an obvious truism, specifically, in many dialect contact situations. Trudgill (1986) assumed that individual accommodation during dialect contact is a long process that leads to the emergence of a mixed dialect. Britain (1997) pointed out in his study of East Anglia that individual accommodation to the target dialect is an accumulative process. Therefore, people start to use the dialect variably, and when this contact lasts for a long time, a clear change will happen, and in most cases, a koine or a new dialect will be formed. Previous studies of Saudi dialects have revealed that variability is obvious in the speech of Saudis in different cities. In fact, based on the social changes and the two periods of internal immigrations, the author would suggest that this variability has two successive linguistic phases. In the beginning, the immigrants, who mainly immigrated to Mecca and Jeddah, tend to (sometimes conditionally) adopt Hijazi features such as stops [t], [d] and [dˤ]; and, on the other hand, they avoid their heritage features such as diphthongs [aw] and [aj] and the affricated variants of (k) and (g). The concept of simplification also occurs in immigrants' dialects, and it is obvious in eliminating gender distinction in the plural suffix variants in the present tense verb. Immigrants tended to use the Hijazi neutral suffix which is the masculine form (Al-Essa, 2008).

With all these changes in the country including the rapid mobility to Riyadh as elaborated above, immigrants became aware of the power that Riyadh and its people have. The immigrants immersed themselves in Najdi culture and interacted, on a daily basis, with Najdi people. This certainly affected and reshaped the immigrants' social and linguistic attitudes and behaviors. At this juncture, the author assumes that the second phase of variability has occurred. Many Saudi people continue to avoid regional markers, but in this phase, they tend to adopt more Najdi variants such as the affricate [dʒ] and some other phonological and syntactical features. This is a change from above (Labov, 1966), as the immigrants are aware of the cultural and linguistic dominance of Najd, therefore, they integrate some Najdi variants into their linguistic system. By adopting the dialect which has more status, immigrants use it as a tool to help them feel part of the new surroundings. Chambers (1995: 274) confirms this "We must also mark ourselves as belonging to the territory, and one of the most convincing markers is by speaking like the people who live there". In fact, the immigrants go beyond adopting the status dialect and adopt cultural and social behaviors such as, the way of receiving

guests and presenting food, and celebrating Najdi events such as (GargeSaan). However, it is worth mentioning here that the second phase of variability did not eliminate the first one. This goes along with the basic concept in sociolinguistics that change does not happen all of a sudden. It is a gradual process that starts with a variation over time in some linguistic features. In the beginning, specific old features gradually start to give way to innovative features until the change is complete through the disappearance of the old ones. The existence of both Najdi and Hijazi koines is evidence of change in progress, but there is no indication that the Hijazi one will yet be terminated.

The influence of these two phases is also noticeable on the language of Saudi media: local broadcasts, drama, YouTube content, advertisements, and street billboards. Media is one of the channels that mirror societies' mores, cultures, thoughts, and language. Although it has been thought that mass media is capable of shaping societies, new research suggests that what is recently happening in new media is the opposite; people are controlling the content of the media (Bowman, 2014). Clay Shirkey (2008) has argued that the content in social media is shaped by the people themselves; social media has become the platform that presents a society's culture (cited in Bowman, 2014). Hence, what we hear or read in the media reflects what we use and do as a society. Al-Rojaie (2020) commented on the speakers' linguistic choice in different social platforms. He said, "On these sites, users attempt to use a shared variety that can be understood by nationwide viewers from Saudi Arabia" (ibid: 46). He also pointed out that using a common dialect is integrated with a national identity that young speakers in social media want to show.

Data and Methodology

The data for this study was collected from 26 television advertisements using simple random sampling. The author chose the advertisements, for Saudi companies and products, from YouTube. The length of the advertisements ranged from 30 seconds to one minute and 27 seconds. This kind of data is easily accessible, and it is a good reflection of what the public believe in and use, bearing in mind that people who work in this industry are eager to approach the widest Saudi audience. Hence, the linguistic choice of the workers in and behind the advertisements is an indication of the linguistic situation in the society. I used this material as a point of departure to try to conceptualize the linguistic trajectory in Saudi Arabia.

Based on the salience and examined features in previous sociolinguistic and dialectal studies (some examples mentioned above), the author selected the target variants. The author was keen to select variants that represent various Saudi dialects. These variants are listed below:

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[1] It is a celebration that takes place in the middle of Ramadan where children wear traditional clothes and sing traditional songs. This type of celebration began in the gulf cities and spread to Najd areas.

Table 1

The selected variants

The variants	Characteristics
Diphthongs [aw] and [aj]	Diphthongs in non-final position are mainly found in some spoken dialects of southwestern regions and the spoken dialect of the Rwaili tribe (Prochazka, 1988).
Interdentals [θ], [ð], [ðˤ] and their stop counterparts [t], [d] and [đ].	These variants are the classical ones that distinguish between all Saudi dialects and Hijazi varieties.
The affricate [dʒ] and the fricative [ʒ]	Both variants are used variably in Saudi dialects.
The affricated and fricative variants of (k) [tʃ] and [ts] and [s] and [ʃ] respectively	These are marked variants which can be found in some spoken dialects of three main regions: the eastern, northern, and southern regions. They also occur in Najd (including Al-Qassim province)
The palatalized variant of (k) [kʲ]	According to a previous sociolinguistic study, this rare feature occurs in the Ḥarbi dialect in Medina. For further details check Al-Rohili (2019)

All advertisements were transcribed, then the needed variants were extracted by the author. The number of extracted tokens was 155. Then, they were entered into Excel Microsoft to extract percentage using the percent style button.

Results and Discussion

In this section the author illustrated the results which have been preceded by some examples of the extracted tokens. This has been followed by tables that show percentages of the variant's usage. A discussion is provided after each table.

Advertisement #1

Advertisement #1 is from one of the telecom companies in Saudi which was aired during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. In this advertisement only interdentals [ð], [θ] and [ðˤ] are used, [t], [d] and [đ] did not occur at all.

hāða 'this'

yenaðˤðˤef 'cleans'

meθel 'such as'

ʔakθar 'more'

Advertisement #2

Advertisement #2 is from one of the famous restaurant chains. The interdentals did not occur at all, two of the stops are used [d] and [đ].

xʊd 'take'

đaro:ri 'necessary'

Advertisement #3

Advertisement #3 is from the Saudi electricity company. In this advertisement, both interdentals [ð] and [θ] and stops [d] and [t] are used.

Ha:ða 'this'

hada 'this'

tala:tah 'three'

θa:bbet 'set up'

Advertisement #4

Advertisement #4 is for a detergent product. It manifests the existence of both variants [ðˤ] and [đ], in addition to the variant [θ].

aθθeya:b 'men's traditional clothes'

almobayyeđ 'the bleach'

ʔalbɛ:ðˤa 'the white'

la: lelmobayyeđ 'not to use bleach'

ʔabbyađ 'whiter'

beθala:θ 'with three'

baya:ðˤ 'whiteness'

Table 2

The interdentals variants

	Features	No.	%
[ðˤ]	[ð], [θ] and	62	77%
	[t], [d] and [dˤ]	18	23%

The data in Table 2 clearly illustrates that both plain interdentals [θ], [ð], [ð̄ˤ] and stops [t], [d] and [đ] occurred in the language of advertisements. However, comparing the usage of plain interdentals and stops stood at a drastic 54% difference in favor of plain variants.

Advertisement # 5

Advertisement #5 is for Nutella. Both variants [dʒ] and [ʒ] are used.

ʒede:d 'new'

yedʒmaʔna: 'gather us'

Advertisement #6

Advertisement #6 is for Goody mayonnaise. Only the fricative [ʒ] occurs.

ya: ʒama:ʔah 'guys'

ʒa:yyen 'are coming'

Advertisement # 7

Advertisement #7 is for a pastry company. Both variants [dʒ] and [ʒ] are used.

alfadʒer 'sunrise'

mawʒu:dah 'available'

yeʒeblik 'brings you'

Advertisement # 8

Advertisement #8 is for a tea brand. Both variants [dʒ] and [ʒ] occur.

ʕeʒtema:ʔna 'our meeting'

ma:ʒehzat 'not ready'

ardʒu:k 'please'

ʕadʒeblik 'brings you'

Table 3

The (dʒ) variants

Features	No.	%
[dʒ]	50	67%
[ʒ]	25	33%

Regarding the variable (dʒ), 75 tokens were extracted from the advertisements. Table 3 shows that both variants, the affricate [dʒ] and the fricative [ʒ], occurred. Nevertheless, the affricated variant has been used more than the fricative variant with a 34% difference.

The occurrence of the variables (θ), (ð), (ðˤ) and (dʒ) with the range of their variants is not surprising. However, what is surprising is the occurrence of the interdentals and stops in one context which is clear in advertisement #3 and # 4. The variants [ð], [θ] and their stop equivalents [d] and [t] occur in # 3 and the variants [ðˤ] and [đ] in # 4. The data shows that the same speakers are pronouncing the same word variably. For instance, they use both [ð] and [d] in pronouncing the demonstrative pronoun *haða/hada* 'this'. The same thing is happening with the variants [ðˤ] and [đ], a speaker in advertisement #4 uses them variably in the etymology of the word 'white' such as: *ʔalbɛ:ðˤa* 'the white (fm.)', *almobayyeđ* 'the bleach'. Regarding [dʒ] and [ʒ] the manner of their occurrence is no different from the interdentals and stops. This is obvious in advertisements # 5, # 6 and # 8. What really deserves consideration here is the use of [ʒ], advertisement # 5, in the word *ʒede:d* 'new'; it is a Hijazi variant that is used in Najdi syllabification (the mid front vowel [e] in the first syllable). It is common for Hijazi variants to appear in words with Hijazi syllabification, and therefore the word *ʒede:d* is supposed to be *ʒade:d* with a low back vowel [ɑ] in the first syllable. What we have here is a novel linguistic form which combines two variants from the Najdi and Hijazi mixture. In fact, on a daily basis, I have noticed some examples of phonological and morphological intermediate forms which, indeed, need a thorough examination. Having intermediate variants is not something peculiar, as Trudgill (1986, 2004) provided some examples of the occurrence of intermediate forms as a result of contact in different languages such as Spanish and colonial English.

The results also show that the plain interdentals such as [ð], [θ] and [ðˤ] and the affricate [dʒ] predominate, which can be due to the prevalence of these variants among Saudi dialects,

including Najdi. On the other hand, the stops [t], [d] and [dˤ] appear only in the Hijazi dialects (spoken in Mecca, Jeddah, Medina, and some areas in Taif); and the variant [ʒ] is used in the spoken dialects in the south-western region and in some Hijazi dialects. This provides an explanation for the prominence of Saudi-Najdi features.

In line with the results of the previous studies, none of the regional markers occurred in the language of advertisements as Table 3 demonstrates.

Table 4

Other variants

Features	%
[aw] and [aj]	0%
[s] and [ts]	0%
[ʃ] and [tʃ]	0%
[kʲ]	0%

The [aw] and [aj] are both marked variants; they occur in only a few dialects in Saudi. They are used by speakers in some spoken dialects in the south-western region and the dialects of some Bedouin tribes in scattered areas (Prochazka, 1988). People in these areas practice agriculture and cattle grazing. This lifestyle imbued their dialects with negative connotations such as being "rural," "backward" and "old fashioned". Speakers of these dialects eliminate [aw] and [aj] from their speech to align themselves with modernization in the big cities (Al-Shehri,1993; Alghamdi, 2014).

With the high level of mobility in the country, people who immigrated to big cities work hard to avoid standing out, rather, they aspire to be associated with those cities and the variants [s], [ts] and [ʃ], [tʃ] are marked and localized. It is easy to identify where people originally come from by using any of these variants, therefore, people endeavor to avoid using them in order to minimize social differences.

The abandonment of the last examined variant [kʲ] can be ascribed to three major reasons: 1- it is a rare feature, 2- it is extremely localized and, 3- it is hard to be pronounced by non-native speakers. Therefore, this feature does not match with the modern social qualities in the urban societies. Further illustration for this rare feature is provided in Al-Rohili (2019).

In general, the results show the measure in which the advertisements reflect the linguistic behavior in society. The performers (most of them are famous Saudi influencers) tried to sound Saudi more than regional. This goes along with what Al-Rojaie (2020) mentioned about using a common dialect to represent a national identity. It also conforms with the findings of the previous Saudi sociolinguistic studies which revealed that people in urban cities level out linguistic markers that might represent negative connotations or that might reveal where they come from. Instead, they tend to use more neutral, common, modern, and unmarked features. This would explain why lay persons insist on using the term Saudi dialect/ supra-local dialect when they are asked: what type of dialect do you use in your workplace, school and with people who do not come from the same place as you?

The author believes that this current study is a useful starting point for further research with bigger samples from a range of different linguistic sources such as sociolinguistic interviews, social media, and television drama in order to have a better and more accurate description of the putative Saudi koine.

Conclusion and Future Directions

To conclude, this research suggests that we are witnessing an emergence of a dialect that can be called a Saudi koine. One of the characteristics of this supposed koine is that it features a double-sided pole, a Najdi pole and a Hijazi pole. In this koine, people abandon their marked features to choose neutral ones from a linguistic repertoire, Najdi and Hijazi Arabic. The findings show that all local and marked variants were eliminated: diphthongs[aw] and [aj], the affricated and fricative variants of (k) [tʃ] and [ts] and [s] and [ʃ] respectively, and the palatalized variant of (k) [kʲ]. On the other hand, other variants were variably used: Interdentals [θ], [ð], [ðˤ] and their stop counterparts [t], [d] and [đ], the affricate [dʒ] and the fricative [ʒ]. Although the results show that the Najdi pole is more prominent than the Hijazi one, it is impossible to predict either the demise or the continuation of the Hijazi pole at this stage. This is because language change is still in progress which coincides with the continuous and huge social change as the government announces a range of new projects planned for Jeddah. In fact, this might create a balance between the two poles, Najdi and Hijazi. This current study is an attempt to understand the linguistic situation in Saudi and to test the hypothesis of the emergence of a Saudi koine. Further studies are certainly needed to scrutinize and identify this linguistic trajectory.

Bio

Najla M. Alghamdi is an assistant professor in linguistics, sociolinguistics. She is teaching linguistic courses at Taif University, Department of Foreign Languages. Her bachelor's degree was in English language from Umm Al-Qura University, 2001. The master's degree was obtained in applied linguistics from Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, 2004. She got her PhD degree in linguistics, sociolinguistics in 2014 from Essex University, UK. The thesis title is '*A sociolinguistic study of dialect contact in Arabia: Ghamdi immigrants in Mecca*'. In 2018, she obtained the fellowship of British higher education academy (recently called Advance HE). Among her interests are dialect variation and change and teaching English language in higher education. She is ready to supervise master students who are interested in dialect variation and change. Najla dedicates her sociolinguistic research to understand and conceptualize the linguistic situation in Saudi Arabia. She has a vision to launch a big national project with other Saudi sociolinguists to study and document Saudi dialects.

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