

Attitudes Towards Euphemistic Codeswitching in Job Titles in the Saudi Context

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الملخص

لم يحظ التناوب اللغوي في أسماء المهن لغرض التلطيف بالكثير من الدراسة، لا سيما في المجتمعات غير الغربية. لذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تناول هذه الظاهرة عبر بحث تكرر استخدام التناوب اللغوي بين العربية والإنجليزية في أسماء المهن ذات المكانة الاجتماعية المتدنية في المملكة العربية السعودية، والاتجاهات نحو هذه الظاهرة اللغوية. لتحقيق هذا الهدف، أجريت مقابلات مع تسعة عشر من أصحاب هذه المهن، سئلوا في المقابلات عن تفضيلاتهم اللغوية عند الحديث عن أسماء مهنتهم، وما إن كانوا يعدون استخدام التناوب اللغوي عند الحديث عن مهنتهم من قبل الآخرين أحد مظاهر التأدب في التعامل. بالإضافة إلى المقابلات، شارك 936 سعودياً في استبانة إلكترونية أجابوا من خلالها على أسئلة تدور حول استخدام التناوب اللغوي لأغراض التلطيف اللغوي. في المجمل، أبدت أغلبية العينة المشاركة في المقابلات والاستبانة اتجاهات إيجابية حيال استخدام التناوب اللغوي للتلطيف. نوقشت بعض تطبيقات الدراسة في الجزء المخصص لمناقشة النتائج، كالتخطيط اللغوي لتقليل الحاجة إلى استخدام التناوب اللغوي.



Abstract

Euphemistic code-switching in job titles is an understudied linguistic phenomenon, especially in contexts outside Western cultures. Hence, this study attempts to bridge this gap by investigating the frequency of, as well as the attitudes towards, euphemistic code-switching between Arabic and English for low-status job titles in Saudi Arabia. To achieve this aim, nineteen employees and freelancers working in low-status jobs were interviewed. They were asked about their linguistic preferences for their job titles and whether they find Arabic-English code-switching to be a sign of politeness from others when referring to the worker's job titles. In addition to the interviews, 936 Saudi respondents filled out an online questionnaire in which they provided information about their attitudes towards euphemistic code-switching. Overall, the interviewees showed a preference towards euphemistic code-switching. A similar pattern was also confirmed in the data of the questionnaire. The implications of these findings, such as, corpus planning to minimise the need for code-switching, have been provided towards the end of the paper.

Keywords: *Arabic; attitudes; code-switching; euphemism; politeness*

Introduction

Globalization has fostered intercultural communication, giving rise to several linguistic phenomena. One of these phenomena is code-switching (CS), which refers to the use of more than one code (i.e., language) in one setting. This is a common speech feature among multilingual speakers, as discussed in more detail in the literature review section below. Another phenomenon that is associated with intercultural communication is the use of a lingua franca. Due to economic, social, and political factors, English has become a lingua franca — “a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth 1996, p. 240). Due to its use as a global language, English might be used for euphemistic purposes, especially to avoid stigmatised words in the native language. Since jobs have varying status levels, some low-status job titles are prone to being replaced with their English equivalents in daily interactions. For instance, the job title ‘qahwaji’ is used to describe the maker and server of Arabic coffee, a profession that is associated with working-class people. Hence, the English word ‘barista’ is widely used as a replacement for the Arabic job title ‘qahwaji’ in Saudi coffee shops, including specialty coffee shops, where modern Western espresso coffee is served by young people or by full-time professionals.

Despite the large number of studies on CS (see the literature review section below), very little attention has been given to attitudes towards CS in job titles for euphemistic reasons, especially in Saudi Arabia. To the best of our knowledge, no previous work has addressed this issue in the Saudi context. Hence, this study contributes to the literature on CS between English and Arabic by filling this gap. This study, therefore, aims to investigate whether euphemistic CS changes the way the community looks at low-status jobs and whether low-status job holders prefer the English job title for their careers. The study focuses on four low-status jobs in Saudi culture: baristas, taxi drivers, cooks, and security officers. These four jobs are more susceptible to euphemistic CS because Saudi locals, unlike many other low status/low-income jobs, are employed in such jobs, and using the English alternative when referring to such jobs can save face for the workers. Thus, the current paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do low-income Saudi employees and freelancers prefer switching to English to refer to their job titles?
2. How do Saudis perceive euphemistic code-switching in job titles?

Literature Review

Code-Switching: Definition and Functions

The term code-switching (CS) refers to the use of more than one linguistic variety in the same conversation. Since this phenomenon is of interest to researchers from varying disciplines, including sociolinguists, philosophers, psycholinguists and anthropologists, different definitions of CS were proposed (see Bullock & Toribio, 2009). The term code can represent both languages and dialects, whereas switching refers to the alternation between different linguistic varieties (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Grammatically, CS is defined as a “discourse phenomenon in which speakers rely on juxtaposition of grammatically distinct subsystems to generate conversational inferences” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 97). Carter and Nunan

(2001, p. 275) defined it as “a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse.” Gardner-Chloros (2009, p. 4) also referred to CS as “the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence by bilingual people.”

According to Wei (1998), a perennial issue in research is the question why bilinguals switch codes during a conversation. As a pragmatic phenomenon, CS, as Auer (1995) indicated, generally occurs for a reason (e.g., communicative or social). CS can be widely used as a tool for achieving interactional goals (Cipriani, 2001; Dahl et al., 2010; Liebscher & Daily-O’cain, 2005; Shin & Milroy, 2000). In addition, Shin (2010) argued that CS often reflects the cultural and social identities of the speaker. Moreover, CS plays a scaffolding role in collaborative tasks (Anton & DiCamilla, 1999; Yamat et al., 2011). CS can also be used for euphemistic reasons (Chau & Lee, 2021; Olimat, 2020; Vanyushina & Hazaymeh, 2021). In many cases, some instances of CS might be multifunctional (i.e., used for more than one function) - see (Elridge, 1996). The situation in the Saudi context is not exceptional, and extra-linguistic factors such as, group identity, still appear to be influential.

CS has also been discussed from a sociolinguistic perspective. Speakers, for instance, switch to English outside of the EFL classroom context for social reasons, such as, prestige (Almulhim, 2014). Blom and Gumperz (1972) suggested that setting, social situation, and social event were three types of social constraints that could affect speakers’ choice of codes. Bullock and Toribio (2009) added that social and discursive factors influence bilinguals when they decide to switch codes, such as, reflecting prestige or serving as a membership or group marker. CS can also be used to express certain emotion words whose use might be more appropriate in one language than another (Panayiotou, 2004). Hence, the strategic use of CS might fulfil many social functions (Moodley, 2007). Although CS is a universal phenomenon (DeBose, 2005), most of what we know about it thus far is the result of research in Western settings. It should be noted, however, that CS does not necessarily appear among all bilinguals or in all communities or social situations (Bullock & Toribio, 2009; Heller, 1988).

Politeness and Euphemism

Politeness is best expressed as the practical application of good manners or etiquette (Spolsky, 1998, p. 19-20). In 1987, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed politeness theory, arguing that saving face is a major factor to be considered by speakers of all languages. Interactors, they added, are likely to act politely as senders and receivers of messages, showing respect, solidarity, and the saving of face. Saving face, Brown and Levinson clarified, can be divided into (1) positive face, where the appreciation of positive self-image and personality is sought, and (2) negative face, where speakers want their actions to be undistracted by others. They added that “want” is “highly culture-specific, group-specific, and ultimately idiosyncratic” (p. 64). Since a low-income job can threaten its holder’s positive face, alternative euphemistic terms might be used by either the people holding these jobs or by other people when addressing them (see Wardhaugh, 2010).

Euphemism is a type of politeness that makes use of ambiguity as well as connotation (Alhuseini, 2007). As Sadock (1993) put it, the term euphemism is an expression intended by the speaker to be less offensive or troubling to the listener than the word or phrase it replaces. Thus, speakers tend to avoid taboo terms and use alternatives within the language itself or from

other languages. Lyons (1985) stated that sociolinguists should study social taboos operative within the language community. Euphemisms can be divided into two types: positive and negative (Rawson, 1981). Some early research on euphemistic CS includes Mencken (1962), Barnett (1964), and Gerber (1969), all of which were conducted on American English, where CS was used to avoid the use of the job title undertaker. Van Hateren (1997) clarified that positive euphemism implies expressions perceived to be inflated or magnified, such as, job titles (e.g., counsel for lawyer). Such titles, Van Hateren added, may elevate job status, and thus satisfy workers' egos. This is the type of euphemism investigated in the current study. The other category of negative euphemism, on the other hand, tends to act defensively by deflating taboo terms in society to eliminate those terms that society may be reluctant to use, such as, substituting the term 'servant' with 'help'. It is worth mentioning as well that the use of both positive and negative euphemism might be conscious or subconscious. Subconscious usage, Van Hateren (1997) added, implements the use of terms such as, 'cemetery,' a Greek term meaning 'sleeping place,' where it is hard for the user to remember the origin or the reason of such euphemism.

Political Correctness and Euphemism

For several reasons, some linguists argued that political correctness is a sort of euphemism (Sirulhaq, 2020). First, it calls for a more accurate usage of language (e.g., chairperson is more accurate when a woman chairs a meeting). Second, politically correct terms intentionally point out specific groups' identity; the Black American community's choice of the term "African Americans" tends to focus on African roots along with belonging to the United States, which is in line with usage from other ethnic communities such as, Italian Americans and Japanese Americans. Since the current study investigates euphemisms associated with low-status jobs, CS in this case can be conceived of as a form of political correctness, especially from those who work in such jobs and may feel stigmatised by the Arabic job title. The next section is dedicated to studies about euphemism in the Saudi context.

Euphemism in the Saudi Context

In this section, we shed light on research on euphemism in Saudi Arabia. In a study that attempted to list the functions of euphemism in the varieties of Arabic spoken in Saudi Arabia, Al-Azzam et al. (2017) argued that euphemism serves religious and social functions. In their study, they cited examples of euphemism in the religious context, as well as examples of euphemism in referring to body parts, sexuality, gender, death, fatal diseases, and offensive topics. Interestingly, they reported that euphemism also existed in referring to inferior job titles, such as drummers, janitors, and street cleaners. None of the examples they cited, however, showed that CS was used to refer to low-status jobs for euphemistic functions, as all the examples they reported were instances of replacements of taboo Arabic words with more socially acceptable Arabic terms. Other studies involved comparative accounts between euphemisms locally and globally.

For instance, Al-Khasawneh (2018) conducted a study comparing the functions of euphemism in Saudi Arabic and American English. The study suggested that similar strategies could be found between the two codes, yet euphemisms were more frequently used in Saudi Arabic. In another comparative account, Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni (2012) argued that similarities

could be found between euphemisms in Saudi Arabic and British English. Thus, they called for familiarizing L2 learners with euphemistic strategies. Almufawez et al. (2018) also conducted a comparative study on the frequency of the use of euphemism in referring to topics such as, death, abortion, fatal diseases, and unpleasant situations. The perceptions of euphemisms by Saudi ESL speakers living in the US were explored by Alharthi (2020). In his study, he attempted to raise the awareness of Arabic speakers, the importance of the topic, and how language choice may affect communication.

Until recently, very few Saudi locals have preferred to work in low-income jobs. This change, as suggested by Wardhaugh (2010) above, led to increasing use of euphemistic alternative terms. Lack of substitute terms in the Arabic language, in addition to the high status of English, may lead to the use of CS between Arabic and English to mitigate the low status appearance of an individuals' jobs. None of the studies reviewed above, however, investigated the use of CS to serve euphemistic functions. Hence, this study aims to discuss the use of CS as a means of euphemism in the Saudi context when referring to low-income jobs/workers. It also aims to study the attitudes of those workers towards using the English term for their jobs. More focus will be paid to low-status jobs in which young locals are employed, such as, baristas, cooks, and drivers.

Data and Methodology

The data collected in this study comprised interviews with 19 Saudi subjects working in low-status jobs, either as employees or freelancers, and a questionnaire completed by 936 Saudi participants. The data collected from the interviews and the questionnaires were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The subsections below provide more details about these two datasets.

The Interviews

The interviews aimed to elicit data about the interviewees' language preferences when referring to their jobs, either by themselves or by others. To achieve this aim, 19 Saudi individuals who work in low-income part-time or full-time jobs (Uber drivers, baristas, security officers, and chefs) were interviewed. Each participant was interviewed individually for approximately 10 minutes. The interviews were aimed to determine whether the interviewees preferred their jobs to be described/referred to using the low-status Arabic term or its English equivalent, which is often conceived of by locals as more prestigious. In addition, the interviewees were asked about their opinion about the phenomenon of CS for euphemistic reasons.

As shown in Table 1 below, the interviewees, who come from various geographical backgrounds in Saudi Arabia, are comprised of five Uber drivers, five private security officers, five chefs, and four baristas. Except for two of the baristas, all the interviewees were males. The age of the interviewees ranged from 23 to 45 at the time they were interviewed. All the participants are Arabic speakers. Some of them are bilinguals with varying degrees of English proficiency. Note that the exact English level was hard to ascertain without a proficiency test. Since the proficiency test was hard to conduct on volunteers who do not have the time to sit for an English test, the researchers resorted to asking the interviewees to rate their English proficiency on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 reflects an inability to use English for daily

communication and 10 reflects an ability to use English without any communication breakdowns. Due to the limited number of Saudis working in the targeted professions, convenience sampling and snowball sampling were employed. The researchers approached their relatives, friends, acquaintances, and searched Instagram and Twitter for potential interviewees who work or have experienced working as chefs, security officers, baristas, or uber drivers. Those who agreed to participate in the study were informed prior to the interview that their participation was voluntary, that their personal data would be confidential and that they had the freedom to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Table 1

Interviewees

| No. | Interviewee | Gender | Age | Experience | Job | English level* |
|-----|-------------|--------|-----|------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | B1 | Male | 26 | 2.5 years | Barista | 8 |
| 2 | B2 | Female | 26 | 2 years | Barista | 6 |
| 3 | B3 | Male | 25 | 1 year | Barista | 7 |
| 4 | B4 | Female | 23 | 1 Month | Barista | 9 |
| 5 | C1 | Male | 33 | 7 years | Chef | 4 |
| 6 | C2 | Male | 39 | 1 year | Chef | 9 |
| 7 | C3 | Male | 23 | 1 year | Chef | 4 |
| 8 | C4 | Male | 30 | 15 years | Chef | 10 |
| 9 | C5 | Male | 45 | 30 years | Chef | 5 |
| 10 | S1 | Male | 30 | 10 years | Security officer | 4 |
| 11 | S2 | Male | 30 | 11 years | Security officer | 8 |
| 12 | S3 | Male | 45 | 3 months | Security officer | 3 |
| 13 | S4 | Male | 52 | 1 year | Security officer | 2 |
| 14 | S5 | Male | 35 | 14 years | Security officer | 8 |
| 15 | U1 | Male | 24 | 3 months | Uber driver | 7 |
| 16 | U2 | Male | 44 | 1 month | Uber driver | 7 |
| 17 | U3 | Male | 34 | 2 years | Uber driver | 9 |
| 18 | U4 | Male | 42 | 3 months | Uber driver | 6 |
| 19 | U5 | Male | 40 | 3 months | Uber driver | 7 |

Note: The interviewees were asked to rate their communicative English proficiency out of ten.

The Questionnaire

To learn more about Saudis' attitudes towards the use of CS in job titles as a means of euphemism, 936 Saudi participants from different age groups, genders, geographical backgrounds, levels of education, and English levels participated in the current study (see Table 2). The questionnaire was created using an online tool (Google Forms) and distributed to participants using WhatsApp. Participation in the questionnaire was anonymised and voluntary (i.e., no personal data were collected, and the participants could withdraw from the questionnaire at any time). The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first collected demographic data (age, gender, geographical background, level of education, and English proficiency). The second section aimed to understand the participants' language preferences when referring to their jobs and their opinion about using English to refer to the occupations of locals. In the third section, the participants were provided with different titles for the professions under investigation (i.e., barista, chef, driver, and security officer) and were

asked to choose the most suitable term to refer to people who work in these jobs. For example, the participants were given four terms for coffee makers (*qahwaji* ‘coffee man’, *mu'id al-qahwah* ‘coffee maker’, *mu'allim alqahwah* ‘coffee expert’, and barista) and were asked to select the most appropriate one. In addition, the respondents were asked to write a short answer for the question ‘why do some Saudis use English terms, rather than Arabic, to describe the jobs barista, security officer, chef, and Uber driver?’

Table 2
Distribution of Participants in the Questionnaire

| Number of participants/Percentage | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Gender | Females: 543 (58%) | | | Males: 393 (42%) | | |
| Age group | 18-25 220 (23.5%) | 26-35 247 (26.4%) | 36-45 232 (24.8%) | 46-59 191 (20.4%) | 60 and over 46 (4.9%) | |
| Province | Central 250 (26.7%) | Eastern 443 (47.3%) | Western 82 (8.8%) | Northern 92 (9.8%) | Southern 45 (4.8%) | Abroad 24 (2.6%) |
| Education | Secondary 226 (24.1%) | BA 356 (38%) | Higher 341 (36.4%) | | Other 13 (1.3%) | |
| English level* | 1 (low) 120 (12.8%) | 2 155 (16.6%) | 3 225 (24%) | 4 173 (18.5%) | 5 (high) 263 (28.1%) | |

Note: Participants were asked to rate their English proficiency out of 5.

The data elicited using the interviews and the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively with the aim of determining the attitudes of both the employees and the public towards euphemistic CS when referring to low-status or low-income jobs. Below is a detailed account of the results of the interviews and the questionnaire.

Results

This section provides the respondents’ answers to questions pertinent to their language preferences for the four job titles under research: chef, barista, security officer, and uber driver. The results section was divided into two parts. The first subsection highlights the interviewees’ responses to the following question: Which language do you prefer to use when referring to your job, and why? The second subsection provides the questionnaire participants’ answers to questions about their preferences among given sets of job titles for baristas, chefs, security officers, and drivers.

Interviews

It can be generalized from the interviewees’ responses to questions about their language preferences for their job titles that English was their preferred language when referring to the

job titles of chef, barista, and driver, while Arabic was preferred for the job title of security officer. Undoubtedly, the respondents' language preferences were not merely random choices but were rather governed by euphemistic reasons. For instance, B1, B2, and B4 suggested that the Arabic word *qahwaji* has a low social status compared to its English equivalent *barista*. Although they both mean the same thing. Interviewee B4 added that the word *qahwaji* implies that the person who works in this profession is not as skilful as a barista. Likewise, all the Uber drivers interviewed in the current study preferred the English word *captain* over the Arabic word *sawwag* (driver). The reasons for this preference are that it is more polite (U1), more respectful (U2), and more socially accepted (U3, U4, and U5). For the chefs, three of the participants had more positive attitudes towards the English word *chef*, suggesting that it is more prestigious (C2 and C3) and has a higher status (C1) than the Arabic word *tabbakh* (cook, chef). C5 stated that although chefs are considered more prestigious by many Saudis, the job title "does not change one's reality". C4, on the other hand, preferred the Arabic word because all his customers, who are mostly locals, are Arabic speakers.

The security officers showed a different trend, favouring the Arabic term *rajul amn* 'a security man' over the English term *security*. However, this divergent trend stemmed from similar euphemistic factors, as the English word *security* has long been used to differentiate this job from the more prestigious and socially acceptable job of *police officer*. Hence, replacing this low-status term with a more socially acceptable Arabic term would be welcome by those who work as security officers. Indeed, all five security officers interviewed in the current study stated that they prefer the Arabic title *rajul amn* over its English equivalent *security* because the English job title connotes low income (S1), low status (S2 and S3), and lack of education (S5).

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire aimed to investigate the attitudes and language preferences of a sample of Saudis towards euphemistic CS when referring to low-status jobs. As detailed earlier, 936 Saudi respondents volunteered to participate in the current study. The first question the participants were prompted to answer was: Do you use English words/terms when speaking in Arabic? Nine percent of the sample declared that they always switched codes in their speech, and 11.8% stated that they often used English words in their Arabic speech. A large proportion of the sample (36.9%) reported that they switch codes sometimes, while 26.4% claimed that they rarely do, and 15.4% of the sample reported that they never switch codes when speaking Arabic. Note that it is not assumed that these figures accurately reflect the participants' actual performance, but they can be taken as an indication of the participants' performance in terms of CS. It can be understood from these figures that code-switching is a commonly used feature in the speech of the polled sample, as only 15.4% of the sample reported that they never switch codes between English and Arabic.

The participants were also asked to provide potential reasons for why some Saudi users of social media refer to their jobs in English. Since the participants could skip answering this question, fewer than half of the participants gave potential reasons, such as: *it is more prestigious, it is trendier, to gain more interest, because they interact with non-Arabic speakers, the English term describes the job more accurately, to look more professional, and to show off.*

The participants were then asked to answer the following question: Which of the following words is nicer when referring to those who prepare coffee? The participants were given these options: *qahwaji* ‘coffee man’, *mu’id al-qahwah* ‘coffee maker’, *mu’allim alqahwah* ‘coffee expert’, *barista*, and *other* (see Table 3 below). Only 7.6% of the sample selected the Arabic word *qahwaji*, which was not surprising because this word has negative connotations, as reported in the previous subsection. The rest of the participants chose other more socially acceptable Arabic words or the English alternative (i.e., *barista*): *mu’id al-qahwah* (31.2%), *mu’allim alqahwah* (13.9%), and *barista* (44.3%). Fewer than 3% of the sample preferred to use job titles not mentioned in the list of options, such as, *teaboy*, *mister*, and *coffee specialist*. We will return to these findings in the discussion section below.

Table 3
Preferred Job Title for Baristas

| Option | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| <i>qahwaji</i> ‘coffee man’ | 7.6% |
| <i>mu’id al-qahwah</i> ‘coffee maker’ | 31.2% |
| <i>mu’allim alqahwah</i> ‘coffee expert’ | 13.9% |
| <i>barista</i> | 44.3% |
| <i>other</i> | 3% |

The next question in the questionnaire was: Which of the following do you prefer to use to describe the job of security officers? These options were provided to the respondents: *rajul amn* ‘security man’, *haris amn* ‘security guard’, *security* (a locally shortened version of the English term *security officer*), and *other* (see Table 4 below). Forty-one percent of the respondents preferred the Arabic term *rajul amn*, 26.1% of the participants chose the Arabic term *haris amn* ‘security guard’, and 31.2% of the respondents selected the option *security officer*. This preference for the Arabic terms is in line with the interviewees’ language preference mentioned above.

Table 4
Preferred Job title for Security Officers

| Option | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| <i>rajul amn</i> ‘security man’ | 41% |
| <i>haris amn</i> ‘security guard’ | 26.1% |
| <i>security</i> | 31.2% |
| <i>other</i> | 1.7% |

Then, the participants were provided with options for the appropriate job title for those who work in the profession of food preparation. The options were *Chef*, *tahi* ‘the Standard Arabic word for chef’ and *tabbakh* ‘cook’. Table 5 lists the respondents’ preferences. Fifty-seven percent of the sample preferred the English word *chef*, whereas 22.7% of the sample preferred the word *tahi* and 20.2% preferred the word *tabbakh*. The preference for the English word *chef* can be explained by the historically low status of the profession of preparing food in the local culture, making the Arabic job titles a downgrade when referring to individuals in this profession.

Table 5*Preferred Job Title for Chefs*

| Option | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| <i>Chef</i> | 57% |
| <i>tahi</i> ‘chef (Standard Arabic)’ | 22.7% |
| <i>tabbakh</i> ‘chef (Nonstandard Arabic)’ | 20.2% |

The following question aimed to determine the participants’ language preference for the job title *driver*. The participants were given the following options: *Captain* (the job title given by a local ride-hailing company), *sa’iq* ‘driver (Standard Arabic)’ and *sawwag* ‘driver (Nonstandard Arabic)’. Most of the participants chose either the English word *captain* (42%) or the standard Arabic word (47%). The nonstandard word was chosen by only 11% of the participants. Although the English term was chosen by fewer than half of the participants, these results provided additional evidence that euphemistic CS is a common practice because the word *sawwag* is the word typically used to refer to family drivers. On-demand drivers, as revealed in the interviews section above, dislike this term because they prefer to be distinguished from low-income and low-status domestic workers. Table 6 summarizes these findings.

Table 6*Preferred Job Title for Drivers*

| Option | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| <i>Captain</i> | 42% |
| <i>sa’iq</i> ‘driver (Standard Arabic)’ | 47% |
| <i>sawwag</i> ‘driver (Nonstandard Arabic)’ | 11% |

Finally, the respondents were asked to provide potential reasons why some Saudis use English job titles instead of their Arabic alternatives. The 759 respondents who answered this question had conflicting views about this phenomenon. The reasons given by the respondents could be categorized into the following groups: (naively) imitating other people (8.4%), because it is nicer to replace the Arabic job title with its English equivalent (29.8%), because they are used to using the English job title (22.4%), because they want to show off their bilingualism (15.5%), because of globalization (7.8%), because the English job titles are shorter or easier to pronounce compared to the Arabic ones (8.2%), and for marketing reasons (3.7%). The rest of the respondents stated that they do not know the rationale behind this phenomenon. Table 7 below provides a summary of these findings.

Table 7*Reasons for Replacing Arabic Job Titles with English Titles by Some Saudis*

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Imitating others | 67 | 8.4% |
| The English title is nicer | 236 | 29.8% |
| The speakers are used to the English title | 177 | 22.4% |
| Showing off | 123 | 15.5% |
| Globalization | 62 | 7.8% |
| The English job titles are easier to pronounce | 65 | 8.2% |
| Marketing | 29 | 3.6% |

The findings of the interviews and the questionnaire are discussed in the section below.

Discussion

As elaborated in the literature review section above, Al-Azzam et al. (2017) reported that euphemism is frequently used in Saudi Arabia for low-status job titles. The findings of the current study listed above provide evidence that euphemism is not only achieved by replacing the Arabic job title with a more socially acceptable Arabic word. Furthermore, the results of our study provide evidence that euphemism can also be achieved via CS when referring to low-status job titles. This, according to the data, is a common phenomenon. It was interesting to determine that a considerable number of the sample prefer to use this type of CS despite negative attitudes towards CS among speakers who live and have grown up in a monolingual society (see, for instance, Dewaele & Wei, 2013, and Holmes & Wilson, 2017).

As illustrated above, most of the interviewees preferred to use the English words *chef*, *barista*, and *captain* over their Arabic equivalents. They provided justifications for this preference, which all revolve around choosing a more acceptable term than the inferior Arabic titles. The job title *security officer* is a unique example of euphemistic CS, as it provides evidence that euphemistic CS can also be from English to Arabic. This job has long been considered a low-status profession by locals, and hence, the word *security* has acquired a negative connotation in Saudi culture. Therefore, it is nicer and more respectful, as suggested by the interviewees, to replace this job title (i.e., security) with a more socially acceptable Arabic alternative.

The findings of the questionnaire also reveal that CS is favourable among the participants. This was evident from the fact that 44.2% of the sample preferred the English word *barista*, more than any other Arabic word from the list of options they were provided. A similar pattern is also witnessed in the respondents' answer to the question pertinent to their language preference for the job title of chefs. More than half of the sample (57%) preferred the English word *chef* over the two other Arabic alternatives. For the word captain (i.e., driver), nearly half of the sample (42%) preferred the English word *captain*. Although a larger number (47%) preferred the Standard Arabic job title *sa'iq*, euphemistic CS is not an uncommon feature here. The English word *security* was selected as an appropriate job title by nearly one-third of the sample (31.2%), but more participants (41%) preferred the Arabic job title *rajul amn* 'security man'.

The popularity of euphemistic CS among both the participants and the interviewees can be explained by Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, which is discussed above. Positive politeness entails that speakers consider a hearer's dignity by protecting their face (social image). The respondents to the questionnaire, for instance, suggested that using English job titles is nicer (29.8%) and that those who work in these professions are used to these titles (22.4%). Hence, it would threaten a barista's face, for example, to address them as 'qahwaji', although both words mean roughly the same.

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the extent to which euphemistic CS is used low-status job titles and the attitudes of the public about this type of CS. To this end, 19 interviewees, mostly male Saudis, who work in low-income jobs (baristas, cooks, drivers, and security

officers) were interviewed, and 936 participants filled out a questionnaire that elicited data about their opinions on euphemistic CS. The findings of the interviews suggest that low-status job holders prefer to avoid the stigmatised job title by using an alternative term from either Arabic or English (e.g., *Captain* instead of ‘sawwag’ and ‘haris amn’ instead of *Security*).

The study addresses a topic that has received very little attention in literature (i.e., euphemistic CS in job titles) and is under-researched. There are limitations, however, that were hard to overcome in this research. For instance, it would have been better to compare the respondents’ attitudes with naturally occurring attitudes (i.e., how would they refer to their jobs in spontaneous interactions). However, this was hard to achieve in a sociolinguistic interview. Even the respondents’ code choice when referring to their jobs during the interviews, in which euphemistic CS was the norm, can hardly be taken as evidence of actual use because they were conscious about what language to use for their titles during the interviews. Moreover, we wished we could interview more females, but this was hard to achieve due to the scarce number of Saudi females in the target jobs, especially taxi drivers and security officers.

Choosing which term and which language to use for job titles is informed by historical, sociocultural, and economic factors. It is a sign of politeness to not embarrass low-status job holders, even if one must choose a term from another language. This has implications for those interested in corpus planning, as the public will not find themselves having to borrow a term from another language if there are no stigmatised terms within the primary language.

Euphemistic CS is an under-researched phenomenon, and there are plenty of cases where speakers need to avoid a term and use an alternative language. This seems to be an ever-growing feature employed by speakers worldwide amid the spread of English and the increasing number of people who speak it as a second or foreign language. Hence, there is a need to explore this phenomenon more in future research.

Bio

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