

An Exploration of Adjective Intensification System in Najdi Arabic

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المخلص

تُعد هذه الدراسة جزءاً من مشروع بحثي يبنى المنهج الوظيفي لاستكشاف عناصر توكيد الصفات التي يستخدمها متحدثو اللهجة النجدية في مدينة الرياض على اختلاف تراكيبها النحوية. تستكشف هذه الدراسة الأدوات المتاحة لمحدثي اللهجة النجدية لتوكيد الصفات (بما في ذلك أدوات التضخيم والتخفيف) وتحاول توضيح أصلها اللغوي وتطورها في ضوء نظريات النحو. كما تصنف هذه الأدوات دلاليًا وتحسب تكرارها وتكرار الفئات الدلالية التي تنتمي لها. حُللت أدوات توكيد ثلاثة آلاف وخمسمئة وثمانين صفة في بيانات لغوية تتكون من مئة وثمانية وأربعين ألفاً وثلاث وعشرين كلمة. وُجد أن استخدام متحدثي اللهجة النجدية لتوكيد الصفات يُعتبر قليلاً مقارنةً بمتحدثي اللهجات العربية الأخرى. كان تضخيم الصفات أكثر شيوعاً من التخفيف. ضمن أدوات تضخيم الصفات، كانت أدوات التعزيز (boosters) أكثر استخداماً من أدوات التعظيم (maximisers). في أدوات التضخيم والتخفيف، وُجد أن هناك عنصرين في كل منهما تُستخدم أكثر من غيرها من العناصر. وكان عنصر التضخيم "مَرّه" هو الأكثر استخداماً بين جميع عناصر التوكيد في البيانات. تُمهّد هذه الدراسة الطريق للأبحاث المستقبلية التي تتناول موضوع عناصر التوكيد في اللغة العربية ولهجاتها نظراً لندرة الأبحاث ذات الصلة في الأدبيات. هذه الدراسة مهمة أيضاً في العديد من التخصصات اللغوية مثل اكتساب اللغة والبراغماتية الاجتماعية والترجمة.



Abstract

This paper is part of a larger research project that adopts a functional approach to explore adjectival intensification elements that function as adjective intensifiers used by Najdi dialect (ND) speakers in Riyadh despite their varying syntactic constructions. The study uncovers the forms in that ND speakers have at their disposal for adjective intensification (i.e. amplifiers and downtoners) and attempts to briefly unpack their linguistic origin and evolution in light of grammaticalisation theories. It also semantically classifies those forms, and calculates the frequency of these forms and the semantic categories they represent. In a corpus of 148,023 words, the intensification of 3,508 adjectives was analysed. Overall, ND speakers in Riyadh intensified adjectives less frequently compared to the rate of adjective intensification employed by speakers of other Arabic varieties. Adjective amplification was found to be more frequent than adjective moderation, whereas boosters were found to be more common than maximisers. ND speakers used two forms of both amplifiers and downtoners more frequently than the other forms in each subcategory. The booster *marrah* ‘very’ was the most frequent intensifier among all the forms in the data. This study paves the way for future research on Arabic intensifiers given the scarcity of relevant research in the literature and is deemed significant across various linguistic disciplines like language acquisition, socio-pragmatics, and translation.

Keywords: *amplifier; downtoner; intensifier; intensification; Najdi Arabic world*

Introduction

An intensifier in language like the word *marrāh* ‘very’ in the Najdi dialect (ND) (see Example 1)² is defined as a “device that scales a quality up or down or somewhere between the two” (Bolinger 1972, p. 17). According to Quirk (1972), intensifiers have “a common heightening or lowering effect on some unit in the sentence” (p. 376). There are several labels in the literature for those elements, and those different names are a reflection of the adopted approach in analysing them (Paradis, 1997). For instance, the label “degree adverbs”, which is a reference to the word class of these elements, prioritises their semantic-grammatical aspect (Benzinger, 1971, p. 105; Paradis, 1997, p. 14). Meanwhile, labels like “intensifier”, “adjunct”, “subjunct”, and “modifier” prioritise their function (Paradis 1997, p. 14). Similarly, in the current study, these devices are defined as functional elements at the disposal of speakers for adjective amplification and downtoning. The functional approach transcends the limitations imposed by grammatical labels, which confine labels to specific word classes despite their similar functions. Consequently, in the literature intensifiers are distributed across different labels, such as degree adverbs, adverbs of manner, and adjuncts, without acknowledging their connection. The functional approach emphasises their common function as intensifiers (Bolinger, 1972; Paradis, 1997). They achieve this function by scaling the degree of the adjective upward or downward. These devices are characterised by being optional, belonging to different grammatical classes, and having different syntactic structures.

- (1) *w-kll-hum* *mašaʕlāh* *muʔaddab-īn* *marrāh*
and-all-they Godbless INDEF.polite. PASS.PTCP.PL very
‘And they are all very polite God bless them’

Studies in the English language and other Indo-European languages that analyse these elements often focused on adjective intensification because higher numbers of these elements collocate with adjectives (Bäcklund, 1973). In the Arabic context, Abo Shaady (1995) also reported that these devices tend to modify adjectives more frequently in Egyptian Arabic (EA). This is the motivation for choosing the context of adjective modification specifically for investigation in the current study. Additionally, this study constitutes part of a larger variationist investigation of adjective intensifiers in ND. Commitment to studying intensifiers within a variationist paradigm entails dedication to “the principle of accountability” (Labov 1972, p. 72). This principle entails that all contexts of variable variation must be identified, including the contexts where the variable could have occurred but did not (*ibid*). Thus, the context of adjective intensification represents a fruitful environment for this kind of investigation since we can identify intensified and unintensified adjectives (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003).

² The transliteration system is an adaptation of (Dickins, 2020). The only difference is that for a for a glottal stop sound this paper uses /ʔ/ instead of /ʻ/ (see Appendix A).

Significance of Studying Adjective Intensifiers in ND

Examination of adjective intensification in ND enhances our understanding of this specific linguistic feature. It also offers valuable insights for the broader linguistic knowledge. First, documenting these elements in spoken Arabic is a necessary dialectological step because these elements constitute a significant part of ND. This is especially valuable given the stigma that surrounded spoken Arabic for a long time which contributed to the negligence of spoken Arabic varieties and the scarcity of exhaustive documentations of these varieties (Albirini, 2016; Versteegh, 2014). Examining intensifiers in ND presents a ground for future explorations of these devices in other Arabic dialects which will contribute to deepening our understanding of dialectal variations within the Arabic language. Additionally, studying the adjective intensification system in ND presents useful data for language typologists. Comprehending how the intensification in ND is realised contributes to the understanding of linguistic diversity and the manner in which languages recruit comparable or different strategies and methods for adjective intensification.

Understanding how ND speakers intensify adjectives can also help with studies on first language acquisition. Observing how children acquire and use adjective intensifiers in their native dialect promotes our knowledge of the early stages of language development. There are also some practical applications of such understanding of adjective intensification in ND in language teaching and translation. Observing how Najdi speakers actually use adjective intensifiers in real communication benefits language learners and translators by providing an advanced understanding of the nuances of expression. Research on Najdi intensification also impacts socio-pragmatic research. It gives linguists the opportunity to investigate how speakers employ intensifiers in many social circumstances and the reasons behind those choices. The study of adjective intensifiers in Najdi Arabic advances theoretical linguistics by enhancing linguistic theories and models. It offers empirical data that can be utilised to challenge or enhance linguistic theories. Hence, this improves our comprehension of language usage and structure.

Research Questions

The objective of the current study is to expand our understanding of the adjective intensification system employed by Najdi Arabic speakers in Riyadh. This entails exploring the forms available for Najdi Arabic speakers to intensify adjectives and categorising those intensifiers using the model proposed by Quirk et al. (1985). Additionally, the study aims to delve into the grammaticalisation and origins of common adjective intensification forms in the Arabic language. Furthermore, it seeks to calculate the frequency of these forms and categories in ND, including the overall frequency of adjective intensification.

Based on the previous objectives, the current study aims to focus on the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the adjective intensification system used by ND speakers in Riyadh?

2. What could possibly be the linguistic origin of common adjective intensifiers in ND, and what are the possible grammaticalisation processes that these forms went through?

The Najdi Dialect

ND is one of the five dialects spoken in Saudi Arabia along with the Hijazi, Gulf, northern, and southern dialects³ (Al-Rojaie, 2023). It is the dialect spoken in the Najd area located in the central and parts of the northern regions of Saudi Arabia (Figure 1). There are roughly 14 million ND speakers in Saudi Arabia alone (as of 2018) and more than 3 million ND speakers are scattered across several countries, including Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait⁴. In Saudi society, this variety is typically considered prestigious, and its association with prestige is largely attributed to the affluent elites who use it (Al-Rojaie, 2020; Al-Rojaie, 2021; Alhazmi & Alfalig, 2021). Ingham (1994) divides the ND into four main subcategories: central, northern, northern-central, and southern ND.

Figure 1

A Map Representing ND in Saudi Arabia⁵



³ Some older references refer to only three major types: Najdi, Hijazi, and Gulf (e.g. Ingham, 1994). It must be acknowledged that the identification of different dialects in the Arabic language is mostly based on geography and not based on linguistic features and isoglosses (Behnstedt & Woidich, 2013). Thus, the lines between different dialects on the map are mostly blurred.

⁴ <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ars> (retrieved on April 8, 2022).

⁵ <http://www.mghamdi.com/SaudiD.jpg> (retrieved on April 22, 2024).

The city of Riyadh presents one of the most important sites for linguistic explorations (Al-Rojaie, 2023). Since Riyadh was announced as the capital city of Saudi Arabia⁶ in 1931, Saudis started gradually migrating to Riyadh, especially from areas around Riyadh during the period between 1950 and 1970, which was amongst the most intensive phases of migration to Riyadh as the population grew from only 83,000 to 350,000. Being the capital city and the centre of modernity, urbanization, and development made it an attraction for job seekers also from outside the kingdom. This made this city a melting pot of different Arabic varieties and languages where there is a high likelihood of contact between speakers of various Arabic and non-Arabic varieties.

This environment triggered dialect levelling in the region, which is described by Kerswill & Williams (1999, p. 149) as “a process whereby differences between regional varieties are reduced, features which make varieties distinctive disappear, and new features emerge and are adopted by speakers over a wide geographical area”. This process of koineization (see Al-Rojaie, 2020; Alkhamees, 2023) makes the form of ND in Riyadh an ideal target for linguistic investigations, especially of elements like intensifiers which are known for being subject to fashion, creativity, and rapid change (Al-Rojaie, 2020; Al-Rojaie, 2023; Alkhamees, 2023; Bolinger, 1972; Bordet, 2015, 2016; Hopper & Traugott, 1993; Peters, 1994; Stoffel, 1901; Woidich, 2018). The superiority of Riyadh city influenced the process of associating the variety spoken there with modernity and prestige and contributed to regarding it as the supra-local dialect in the Najd area. Supra-local dialects are known as the models to mirror when aiming to uplift one’s prestige (Al-Wer & Horesh, 2019). These factors influenced the decision to focus on ND spoken in Riyadh as the subject for this study.

Literature Review

Classification of Intensifiers

There have been different semantic categorisations of intensifiers in the literature. These categorisations differ in how they draw the levels along the scale⁷, and whether they

⁶ https://www.rcrc.gov.sa/ar/magazine_topic/006058 (retrieved on April 9, 2022).

⁷ The notion of scale used here refers to a hierarchical arrangement of intensity among lexical items (Paradis, 1997). Often this concept is understood in semantics by using the relation of incompatibility and the principle of ordering. For a set of words to form a scale, they must be incompatible enough to represent contrast and similarity (Lyons, 1977; Westney, 1986). The intensifiers *completely* and *very*, for example, contrast because *completely* is not the same as *very* (Paradis, 1997). Yet, they are the same in that they both indicate degree (Paradis, 1997). Westney (1986, p. 340) argued that while contrast is “self-evident”, there is still a need for a base for similarity. Thus, Westney (1986) used the concept of entailment to explain the similarity between these lexical elements in scales. Hence, if something is *completely different*, it would entail that it is also *very different* (Paradis, 1997, p. 22). Ordering, on the other hand, refers to the arrangement of lexical items along a scale based on their relative intensity (Paradis, 1997). The relationship of entailment establishes the ordering of lexical items along the scale, indicating which items logically precede or follow others based on their relative intensity (Westney, 1986). For example, *completely hot* entails *very hot* because if something is *completely hot*, it is also *very hot*. Yet, *a little hot* does not entail *very hot* because something which is *a little hot* does not necessarily mean that it is *very hot*. This hierarchical arrangement provides a structure for understanding the semantic orders or relationships between the lexical elements on the scale based on entailment (Westney, 1986). This ordering is not always linear; it can be multidimensional or hierarchical, depending on the semantic context. Researchers have noted that the notion

include non-degree categories like modality intensifiers under their label of intensifiers. Most available categorisations have drawn a line between devices with an upscaling effect and those with a downscaling effect (e.g., Bäcklund, 1973; Bolinger, 1972; Paradis, 1997; Quirk, 1972; Quirk et al., 1985; Stoffel, 1901). Some models have distinguished devices with a moderating effect that points towards a middle point on the scale (e.g., Bolinger, 1972). Additionally, other models have divided the semantic collocational relation between the intensifier and the modified adjective (e.g., Allerton, 1987; Paradis, 1997).

The categorisation that will be adopted in this study is that of Quirk et al. (1985). The main reason behind choosing this division is its common use in the literature which allows for cross-linguistic comparisons. According to Quirk et al. (1985), degree intensifiers are divided into two categories: amplifiers and downtoners, which are both considered degree modifiers (i.e. modify the degree of the quality on a scale). Quirk et al. (1985) also identified a third category, which are emphasisers or modal intensifiers such as *wallaḥ* ‘I swear, truly’ and *ṣarāḥah* ‘honestly’. These function as elements that express the commitment of the speaker towards the truth value of the modified quality. The current study focuses only on degree intensifiers and excludes modal intensifiers.

The function of amplifiers, like the booster *very*, is to scale upward (Quirk et al., 1985), whereas downtoners such as *a little* scale downward (Quirk et al., 1985). Amplifiers are divided into two subcategories: maximisers, which indicate the highest point on a scale (e.g. *completely*), and boosters, which indicate a high point on a scale (e.g. *very*) (Quirk et al., 1985). Meanwhile, downtoners are subcategorised into four groups. Approximators express “an approximation to the force” of the adjective and also imply that the modified adjective “expresses more than is relevant” (e.g. *nearly* and *almost*) (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 597). Compromisers serve to express that the modified adjective is less than relevant (e.g. *kind of* and *sort of*) (Quirk et al., 1985). Diminishers serve to scale downward (e.g. *a bit* and *a little*) (Quirk et al., 1985). Minimisers serve to express the lowest point on a scale (e.g. *hardly* and *at all*) (Quirk et al., 1985).

Intensifiers in Arabic Varieties

Linguists have traditionally neglected and overlooked intensifiers, considering them an “ill-defined” group of adverbs (Benzinger, 1971, pp. 104–105). However, this view has been challenged by the development of theoretical conceptualisations that underscored their value within the linguistic system (Pichler, 2016) and the publication of studies that examined intensifiers. These works have triggered a growing interest in studying intensifiers in the English language (e.g. Benzing, 1971; Biber et al., 1999; Buchstaller & Barnfield, 2010; D’Arcy, 2015; Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003; McManus, 2012; Paradis, 1997, 2000; Partington, 1993; Peters, 1994; Quirk et al., 1985; Tagliamonte, 2008; Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005; Yiu & Paradis, 2000). Studies of intensifiers in languages other than English have also been

of scalarity extends beyond strict linear scales and can encompass multidimensional relationships between lexical items (for further details see Paradis, 1997; Westney, 1986).

conducted, including in German (Stratton, 2020), Japanese (Tsujimura, 2001), Chinese (Luo & Wang, 2016), and Persian (Sardabi & Afghari, 2015).

References to intensifiers in ND or other Arabic varieties can be found in syntactic explorations of adverbs (e.g. Abo Shaady, 1995; Al Barrag, 2014; AlShammiry, 2016; Al-Shurafa, 2005) or dialectology studies (e.g., Abboud, 1964; Ingham, 1994; Qafisheh, 1977). To the best of my knowledge, only two studies have adopted a similar functional quantitative approach that is comparable to the current study. The first one is by Omar and Alotaibi (2017), who conducted a sociolinguistic analysis of adjective amplifiers in EA and Saudi Arabic. Omar and Alotaibi (2017) based their analysis on a corpus consisting of 30 recorded episodes of Saudi and Egyptian radio programs. They recorded tokens of adjective intensifiers used by speakers and measured their frequencies. The intensifier found to be highly used by EA speakers was *ʔawī* ‘very’ (Frequency= 337), followed by *giddan* ‘very’ (Frequency = 167). For Saudi speakers, *marrah* ‘very’ was the most common amplifier (Frequency = 251), followed by *jiddan* ‘very’ (Frequency = 244), and lastly *wājīd* ‘a lot’ (Frequency = 67).

The approach adopted by Omar and Alotaibi (2017) to identify intensifiers in EA and Saudi dialects claimed to avoid any bias by identifying all intensifiers used by speakers in the data. However, no further details were provided about their elicitation method. The very few forms of intensifiers found in their data raise questions about the possibility of bias in pre-selecting forms of intensifiers, especially when compared to forms found in Abo Shaady (1995) and the current study (see Table 6). Moreover, Omar and Alotaibi (2017) did not identify instances of bare adjectives (i.e. with no intensification). This means that their approach lacked the overall rate of intensified adjectives in the dialects versus the rate of unintensified adjectives since they only calculated the occurrences of amplifiers. Another shortcoming in Omar and Alotaibi's (2017) study is their treatment of the Saudi dialect as a homogeneous variety, which is a weakness in their analysis because there are differences between the dialects spoken in Saudi Arabia. Lastly, the study by Omar and Alotaibi (2017) is limited in scope because it only studied amplifiers (i.e. downtoners were not explored). The current study aims to be wider in scope by including both amplifiers and downtoners, facilitating a more exhaustive documentation of the whole system.

The second study, conducted by Alshaboul et al. (2022), explored amplifiers in Ammani Arabic (AA). Unlike Omar and Alotaibi (2017), who calculated the frequency of individual amplifiers, Alshaboul et al. (2022) operationalised a variationist approach to investigate adjective amplifiers in AA. This means they extracted adjectives in the data and any form of amplification modifying them to avoid any bias. Their method, unlike that of Omar and Alotaibi (2017), allowed for calculating the frequency of adjective amplifiers compared to unamplified adjectives. Their data was collected through interviews conducted with a sample of 32 speakers. The authors found only two forms of amplification: *kiṭīr* ‘a lot’ and *jiddan* ‘very’. Despite finding only two forms, Alshaboul et al. (2022) presented the amplifier *kiṭīr* as three forms: a single form, an iterated form, and a form with a prosodic lengthening of the vowel /ī/. The phenomena of stressing and duplicating amplifiers have been acknowledged in the literature as one of the intensification methods in the Arabic language (e.g., Al-Aubaidi, 2013; Khanfar, 2016; Omar & Alotaibi, 2017); however, handling those variants as three

separate forms is a departure from the methodological approach typically followed in similar variationist research of intensifiers since there is still just one form used. In their data, the three variants of *kiṭīr* (N = 547) were found to be used more than *jiddan* (N = 34).

Based on the previous review, variations between adjective intensification systems within the various Arabic varieties are evident, especially in terms of the forms used and frequencies of intensification. There is a great need for more research on these frequent elements in Arabic varieties, especially studies that focus on documenting them and drawing a semantic division of these intensifiers and not only focusing on their morphosyntactic aspect. Furthermore, because intensifiers in the Arabic language belong to different grammatical parts of speech and have varying syntactic forms and structures, adopting a functional approach becomes crucial. This is because it prioritises their shared roles and functions over any other linguistic aspect (Bolinger, 1972; Paradis, 1997). To my knowledge, no available research on ND has elicited a list of adjective intensifiers and semantically categorised them based on their intensification functions. The current study takes a step towards filling this significant gap in the literature. It adopts a functional approach that treats different forms of the same function of adjective intensification as belonging to one single category.

Adjectives in ND

An adjective is a word that attributes a property to a noun phrase that it is associated with (Almalky, 2020). In the traditional grammar of Classical Arabic (CA)⁸, there are three-word classes: nouns, verbs, and particles. Adjectives constitute a sub-category recognised by traditional grammarians and are categorised under the umbrella of nouns (Ingham, 1994). According to Dixon (2004), all languages possess an adjective class, although the distinguishing criteria for adjectives from nouns and verbs may vary among languages. Some prototypical features of adjectives identified by linguists include the following four criteria, often utilised in the literature to identify adjectives (Baker, 2003; Dixon, 2004; Hajek, 2004): usage in attributive functions (see Example 2a), usage in predicative functions (see Example 2b), modification by intensifiers (see Examples 2a and 2b), and the formation of a comparative construction (e.g. *rxīṣ* ‘cheap’, and *ʔarxaṣ* ‘cheaper’). While not all adjectives in the ND form the comparative construction in the pattern *ʔafʕal*, many construct it using the adjective *ʔaktar*, such as *ṣaṭḥī* ‘superficial’ and *maqḅūl* ‘acceptable’ (see Example 2c).

- (2) a. *w-hādī yaʕnī nuqtah marrah muhimmah*
 And-this I mean INDEF.point.F.SG very INDEF.important.F.SG

⁸ The Arabic language exemplifies a classic case of diglossia, where CA serves as the prestigious higher variety, while the various spoken dialects represent the lower forms (Ferguson, 1959). Some scholars have made a distinction between CA, which encompasses the language of the Qur’an, early Islamic texts, and poetry from the early Islamic period, and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). MSA is a more contemporary form of Arabic used in official documents, media, literature, education, and public speeches. It is important to note that native Arabic speakers typically do not differentiate between these forms and commonly refer to the high variety simply as *fuṣḥā*. Therefore, for the purpose of this discussion, the term CA is used as a blanket term encompassing both CA and MSA (for further elaboration on the nuances between these forms, refer to Bassiouney, 2014; Bateson, 1967; Haeri, 2003; Mejdell, 2006; Ryding, 2005).

‘And this I mean is a very important point’

- b. *al-swāgah* *baṣad* *marrah* *muṣībah*
ART.Driving.F.SG also very INDEF.tiring.ADJ.SG
‘Driving is also very tiring’
- c. *al-ṣawwal* *ṣaklah* *maqbul* *ʔaktar* *mn* *al-tānī*
DEF.first Shape.POSS Acceptable.SG more than DEF.second
‘The first looks more acceptable than the second’

Another aspect that warrants discussion regarding adjectives in the Arabic language is the status of the participle. The distinctive nature of the participle in Arabic has garnered the attention of many linguists (e.g., Almalky, 2020; Al-Raba’a, 2021; Hallman, 2017; Holes, 2004; Ryding, 2005). According to Holes (2004), the active participle may function as a verb, noun, or adjective, while the passive participle may serve as either a noun or an adjective. This necessitates additional criteria to identify adjectival participles. Therefore, in this study, two criteria proposed by Almalky (2020) to identify adjectival participles were adopted. Firstly, participles that accept possessive pronouns were excluded from the definition of adjectives used in this study, such as *mudarris-na* ‘our teacher’ and *mandūb-hum* ‘their representative, delivery person’ (Almalky, 2020). Almalky (2020) suggests that this is a characteristic of nominal participles. Furthermore, to distinguish deverbal participles, participles with an object were excluded (Almalky, 2020). Therefore, active participles like *mnadḍif-h*⁹ ‘having cleaned it’ and *fāhim al-mawḍūʿ* ‘to come to understand the subject’ were not considered adjectives in the current study¹⁰.

Methodology

Data Collection

This study is based on data elicited from interviews conducted online via Zoom¹¹. Participants were approached through electronic invitations distributed via several social networking platforms, including WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, X (previously Twitter), and TikTok. To represent the ND spoken in Riyadh, all selected participants reside in Riyadh and have a Najdi background (i.e., both parents are from the Najd area). The sample consists of 52 speakers stratified by age, gender, and various educational levels (see Table 1 and Table 2). Of the sample, 45 participants are second generation or above (i.e. born and raised in Riyadh, but their parents could be from Riyadh or other places within the Najd area), while 7 participants are first generation in Riyadh¹² (i.e., born in other places within the Najd area but moved to Riyadh). A male assistant conducted interviews with male speakers, while the researcher conducted interviews with female speakers. This approach was adopted to mitigate any potential effects that might arise due to gender differences. Additionally, being interviewed by the opposite gender may not feel comfortable for some participants due to the segregated nature

⁹ -h is a pronominal object.

¹⁰ For details about patterns of adjectives in ND see (Alfuhaydi, Forthcoming).

¹¹ Approval for this project was granted from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee (AHC REC) at the University of Leeds. Data was collected after a consent from all participants was obtained.

¹² Those were all 47+ years old.

between genders in the Saudi society (Song, 2019). Both the male assistant and the researcher are native ND speakers from Riyadh.

Interviews were conducted between August and November 2022. During interviews, informants were asked various questions to facilitate discussion and ensure comparability across interviews. These questions covered serious topics such as the role of women in Saudi Arabia, religious subjects in school, and racism, as well as light-hearted topics like Eid celebrations, friendships, and favourite times of the day (see Appendices B and C). The rationale behind this variation was to evoke varying degrees of emotional engagement from the speakers. Serious questions were specifically included to elicit higher levels of emotionality and engagement during discussions (see Brown & Tagliamonte, 2012). Data was transcribed using ELAN software. All interview recordings were fully transcribed using Conventional Orthography for Dialectal Arabic¹³ (CODA) (Habash et al., 2018). The corpus consists of 148,023 words.

Table 1

A Breakdown of Speakers in the Data by Age and Gender

Age	Male	Female	Total	
			<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
18–19	4	4	8	15.4%
20s	6	3	9	17.3%
30s	4	7	11	21.2%
40s	4	5	9	17.3%
50s	2	4	6	11.5%
60s	3	3	6	11.5%
70s	2	1	3	5.8%
Total	25	27	52	100%

Table 2

Educational Backgrounds of Speakers in the Data

Educational Background	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Illiterate	1	2%
Primary school	1	2%
Intermediate school	4	8%
High school	14	27%
Diploma	2	4%
BA	17	33%
MA	10	19%
PhD	3	6%

¹³ This writing system is used to transcribe various Arabic dialects, capturing their phonological and morphological features. Its objective is to create a standardised written representation for research, aiming to unify transcription methods across different dialects.

Procedure

Adjective Extraction

As mentioned earlier, because this study is part of a larger ongoing project that examines intensifiers from a variationist perspective, the extraction of adjectives had to adhere to "the principle of accountability" (Labov, 1972, p. 72). The principle of accountability stipulates that, in the context of variation, we should not only include instances of the variable itself but also the slots where it could have occurred but did not (Labov, 1972, p. 72). Therefore, only adjectives that can be modified by intensifiers were added to the final dataset of adjectives (see Table 3). This has become a standard procedure followed by variationists when analysing the variation of intensifiers (e.g. Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003). Several other procedures, summarised in Table 3, were implemented.

Table 3

Adjective Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria in the Data

	Adjective	Procedure	Example/Notes
1	Adjectives that can be intensified	Included	<i>jdīdah</i> ‘new’, <i>muḏḥik</i> ‘funny’ and <i>ḥilū</i> ‘nice’
2	Adjectives that cannot be intensified	Excluded	<i>al-ḡiliktrōnī</i> ‘electronic’ in <i>al-širāʔ al-ḡiliktrōnī</i> ‘electronic shopping’
3	Comparative and superlative adjectives	Excluded	- (see Examples 3a, 3b, and 3c) - Even though they can be modified, however, they have an extra layer of intensity that cannot mirror regular adjectives (see Bordet & Jamet, 2015).
4	Adjectives that are repeated consecutively	Considered as a single token	(see Example 4)
5	Adjectives that are a part of fixed expressions, poetry, and proverbs.	Excluded	
6	English adjectives	Excluded	(see Example 5)
(3)	a. <i>ydawwir</i> search.M.3SG	<i>šarikah</i> INDEF.company	<i>ḡarxaš</i> cheap-CMP
		<i>w-hāḏā</i> and-this	<i>ḥall</i> INDEF.solution
	‘Searches for a cheaper company and this is one solution’		
	b. <i>al-marḡah</i> ART-woman	<i>fī bašḏ</i> in some	<i>al-ḡumūr</i> ART-thing.PL
		<i>šāḡlah</i> wise.F.ADJ	<i>aḡtar mn</i> more than
			<i>al-rajul</i> ART-man
	‘The woman in some matters is wiser than the man’		
	c. <i>hī</i> 3SG	<i>aḡtar lahjah</i> more INDEF.dialect.F	<i>šāḡiṣah</i> INDEF.common.F.ADJ
			<i>fī</i> in
			<i>al-sḡūdiyyah</i> ART-Saudi Arabia
	‘It is the most common dialect in Saudi Arabia’		
(4)	<i>kṡīr</i> Numerous.ADJ	<i>kṡīr</i> Numerous.ADJ	<i>kṡīr</i> Numerous.ADJ
		<i>ḡašyāʔ</i> INDEF.thing.PL	<i>fī</i> in
			<i>al-dīn</i> ART.religion
	‘Numerous, numerous, numerous things in religion’		

(5)	<i>yaʕnī</i>	<i>ʔaḥissa-hā</i>	<i>šayy</i>	<i>hilū</i>	<i>šayy</i>	<i>interesting</i>
	DM	1SG.Feel-it	INDEF.thing.SG	nice.ADJ	INDEF.thing.SG	interesting.ADJ

‘I feel that it is something nice, something interesting’

To ensure adherence to the aforementioned procedure, the analysis was conducted by carefully reading the data and manually extracting adjectives. These adjectives were added to an Excel spreadsheet along with any lexical-grammatical element modifying them in a pre-adjectival or post-adjectival position, and they matched the definitions of amplifiers and downtoners in Quirk et al. (1985). If the adjective was not intensified, the cell designated for intensifiers was labelled as *zero*. The final list of amplifiers and downtoners was informally reviewed by three ND speakers who are current PhD students of translation and linguistics. These speakers were approached in person and provided with a table of the final categorising list, as presented in Table 6 and Table 8. For reference, the three ND speakers were provided with the definitions of these devices as given in Quirk et al. (1985). Their task consisted of checking if the devices had similar functions to the categories in Quirk et al. (1985) and that their translations to English were correct. Calculations of frequencies were all conducted in Excel.

Data Quantification

To quantify the data for this study, several key aspects were emphasized. First, the number of forms used in the system and their respective proportions were analyzed. The study then focused on the frequency of adjective intensification, examining the overall size of the system by assessing the rate of intensified versus unintensified adjectives. Additionally, it explored adjective amplification, including a comparison between the categories of boosters and maximizers. The frequency of adjective moderation was also considered, with an emphasis on the differences in usage between adjective amplification and moderation.

Results and Discussion

Amplified Adjectives, Downtoned Adjectives, and Unintensified Adjectives in the

Data

In the data, amplified adjectives constituted 8.80% (N = 309) of the total number of adjectives, whereas downtoned adjectives constituted only 2.68% (N = 94) of the adjectives (see Table 4). Unintensified adjectives constituted 88.52% (N = 3107) of the total number of adjectives, which formed the majority of adjectives in the data. The proportion of amplifiers in the data (76.67%; N = 309) was higher than that of downtoners (23.33%; N = 94), suggesting that the tendency to amplify meaning was more frequent than the tendency to tone it down in the data (Stratton, 2020). It is not unexpected that the proportion of amplified adjectives was lower than unamplified adjectives because, logically, if the function of amplification were applied to all adjectives, it would not be meaningful (Tagliamonte, 2016).

Table 4*Categories of Intensifiers and Unintensified Adjectives in ND*

	N	%
Amplifier	309	8.80%
Downtoner	94	2.68%
Unintensified adj.	3107	88.52%
Total	3510 ¹⁴	100%

Yet, we saw that the amplification in Alshaboul et al. (2022) contradicted this logical expectation (see Table 5). Their dataset consisted of 969 adjectives, where 60% (N = 581) were amplified and 40% (N = 388) were unamplified.

Table 5*Adjective Amplification in ND in Comparison to Amplification in AA¹⁵*

Study	Language	Amplified		Unamplified	
		N	%	N	%
Current study	Najdi Arabic	401	8.81%	3107	91.19%
Alshaboul et al. (2022)	Ammani Arabic	581	60%	388	40%

The difference in adjective amplification rates between the current study and the AA study is intriguing. Both ND and AA are varieties of the Arabic language, so one would expect to find a similar pattern. The data collection methods were interviews in both studies. One reason for this difference in intensification (amplification) rates could be the sensitivity of topics discussed during these interviews. Alshaboul et al. (2022) in their interviews asked questions that were emotionally engaging but not sensitive. The type employed in Alshaboul et al. (2022) can be compared to unserious questions in the current study. Yet, as stated before, the current study also included a second type of serious questions that might have been sensitive to some participants. Multivariate analysis revealed that amplifiers were marginally favoured with non-serious questions (Factor Weight¹⁶ = 0.502), but the seriousness factor was not found to be statistically significant. Hence, since non-serious topics were marginally favoured, this might partially explain the higher amplification rate found in Alshaboul et al. (2022) as their interviews only included these types of topics. This also can explain the lower rate found in ND in the current dataset.

¹⁴ It must be noted that when the adjective was intensified by two different intensifiers, the adjective was repeated in two rows. When the same intensifier was repeated with one adjective, the adjective was not repeated in two rows. The total number of adjectives in the data is 3,508. There were two instances where one adjective was modified by two intensifiers.

¹⁵ We cannot use Omar & Alotaibi (2017) in this comparison because they did not identify unintensified adjectives.

¹⁶ Factor weights in multiregression analysis range from 0 to 1, with values above 0.5 indicating a favouring effect (Clark, 2010; Johnson, 2009). The degree of the favouring effect increases as the factor weight approaches 1, while weights below 0.5 suggest a disfavouring effect (ibid). A factor weight of 0.5 implies no effect.

Another possible reason for the observed difference could be the criteria for the exclusion or inclusion of adjectives in the data in Alshaboul et al. (2022). This might be the missing evidence needed to explain why adjective amplification was very high in their data. The difference between ND and AA in their amplification rate underscores the need for more intra-linguistic investigations of intensifiers in Arabic dialects to deepen our understanding of these lexico-grammatical elements in varieties of the Arabic language. Further research is needed to investigate other forms of adjective amplification that might, for instance, be more common in ND than these lexico-grammatical elements to intensify adjectives. These forms might be syntactic, for example, like repetition of adjectives, or prosodic, like stress.

Categorisation and Distribution of Intensifiers

Distribution of Amplifiers

Table 6 presents the forms used for adjective amplification in ND and the proportion found for each form. The information presented in Table 6 is crucial because as we have seen in the literature review, previous research on ND intensifiers consisted of simple identification of some forms in the dialect within dialectology studies. Identification, categorisation, and quantification of adjective intensification forms in ND are not available in the literature. When we look at the forms used for adjective intensification (amplifiers and downtoners) by ND speakers, we can clearly notice that some of these forms are shared with CA and not restrictively used in ND. This is not a surprising finding because research on spoken Arabic must deal with the diaglossic context of the Arabic language.

The most sensible step in this case is to distinguish between items that are restricted to ND from those that are shared with CA, and to do so we can benefit from available corpora of CA. However, this investigation, because of the limited scope of this paper, is left for future parts of the project (see Alfuhaydi, Forthcoming). As can be seen from Table 6, the boosters *marrah* ‘very’ and *jiddan* ‘very’ dominated the adjective amplification system. On the one hand, *marrah* specifically constituted 65.37% of all the forms used by ND speakers. On the other hand, *jiddan* occupied 23.62% of the amplification system. The boosters *marrah* and *jiddan* were also found to be the most frequently used forms in the Saudi data provided by Omar and Alotaibi (2017).

Table 6*Distribution of Amplifiers in N*

	Variant	Gloss	N	%
Boosters	<i>marrāh</i>	'very, so'	202	65.37%
	<i>jiddān</i>	'very'	73	23.62%
	<i>kiṭīr</i>	'a lot'	6	1.94%
	<i>b-šakil kibīr</i>	'to a large extent'	3	0.97%
	<i>b-šakil faḍīf</i>	'terribly'	1	0.32%
	<i>flā ḡayr al-ḡādah</i>	'unusually'	1	0.32%
	<i>gwwah</i>	'strongly'	1	0.32%
		Total boosters		287
Maximisers	<i>tamaman</i>	'completely'	9	2.91%
	<i>miyah-bil-miyah</i>	'100%'	7	2.27%
	<i>b-ziyādah</i>	'exceedingly,	4	1.29%
	<i>b-zōd</i>	'exceedingly,	1	0.32%
	<i>lil-ḡāyah</i>	'immensely, extremely'	1	0.32%
		Total maximisers		22
	Grand Total		309	100%

Another interesting finding in the data (Table 6) is the proportion of boosters compared to maximisers. Boosters in the current ND dataset constituted 92.88% of the adjective amplification system, whereas maximisers only occupied 7.12%. Stoffel (1901, p. 2) argued that intensifiers expressing “completeness” (i.e. maximisers) lose their force over time. Their weakened expressiveness becomes a means of expressing a high point (but not the highest) on a scale. At the same time, Quirk et al. (1985) postulated that the category of boosters is open to renewal, and new members are constantly being added. This means the transition from a maximiser to a booster could be one method of adding new members into the category of boosters. This may explain the higher proportion of this category compared to its counterpart. Arabic studies (i.e., Alshaboul et al., 2022; Omar & Alotaibi, 2017), however, did not report any occurrence of maximisers in their data, and all the forms recorded were those of boosters. Previous research did not provide a guide to how adjectives were extracted (Alshaboul et al., 2022) or how amplification forms were elicited (Omar & Alotaibi, 2017), we are unable to comprehend possible reasons for the lack of maximisers in those studies (see Table 7).

Table 7*Distribution of Boosters vs. Maximisers in the Current Study and in Relevant Studies*

Study	Language	Boosters	Maximisers
Current study	Najdi Arabic	92.88%	7.12%
Alshaboul et al. (2022)	Ammani Arabic	100%	0%
Omar and Alotaibi (2017)	Saudi Arabic and Egyptian Arabic	100%	0%

Distribution of Downtoners

Table 8 illustrates the distribution of downtoners in the data. We can observe, like in the case with amplifiers, that two forms dominated the adjective moderation system. The

diminisher *šwayy* 'a little' occupied 53.19% of the moderation system. The compromiser *kiḏā* 'sort of', on the other hand, occupied 26.60% of the downtoning system.

Table 8

Distribution of Downtoners in ND

	Variant	Gloss	N	%
Minimisers	<i>ʔbadan/ʔbadd</i>	'at all'	6	6.38%
	Total minimisers		6	6.38%
Diminishers	<i>šwayy(ah)</i>	'a little'	50	53.19%
	<i>b-šakil xaffif</i>	'slightly, to a small extent'	1	1.06%
	<i>ʔilā-ḥaddin-mā</i>	'to some extent'	2	2.13%
	Total		53	56.38%
Compromisers	<i>nawʕan mā</i>	'kind of, sort of'	2	2.13%
	<i>kiḏā</i>	'kind of, sort of'	25	26.60%
	Total		27	28.72%
Approximators	<i>taqrīban</i>	'nearly'	4	4.26%
	<i>šibh</i>	'semi-'	4	4.26%
	Total		8	8.51%
Grand Total			94	100%

Adjective Intensification Forms

The primary goal of this section is to gain a deeper understanding of adjective intensification in ND by delving into the intricacies of its lexico-grammatical devices. This understanding is better achieved by drawing on theories of grammaticalisation (see Hopper & Traugott, 1993). These frameworks unravel not only the mechanisms of adjective intensification in ND but also the embedded historical and semantic subtleties within ND intensifiers. Thus, in this section, for the common four intensifiers: *marrāh*, *jiddan*, *šwayy*, and *kiḏā*, I will attempt to understand their origins in the language and how it is reflected in their use and properties of amplification¹⁷ by utilising theories of grammaticalisation. Due to space limitations in the current paper, I will only concentrate on four common intensifiers. Ingham (1994) postulated that the forms of intensifiers in ND represent a developmental aspect of the dialect not present in CA. However, this assertion lacks empirical support and warrants validation through methods such as examining CA corpora for comparative analysis. It is known that intensifiers usually transition into their status as functional devices in language based on grammaticalised lexical elements that gradually lose their semantic content (Hopper & Traugott, 1993). Even after being established as intensifiers in a given language, they often continue changing over time (Bordet, 2015; König, 2017; Tagliamonte, 2008).

Nearly 60 years ago, Abboud (1964) recorded *bilmarrāh* in the ND spoken in Hail City¹⁸ and glossed it as 'completely', not as 'very' like its function in the current data. Omar &

¹⁷ When discussing the grammaticalisation of intensification forms, it is essential to acknowledge that insights were derived from aligning existing knowledge of grammaticalisation processes with the available information about intensifiers in ND. Drawing conclusions based on diachronic data is challenging due to the scarcity of historical spoken data of ND.

¹⁸ Hail is a city in the region of Hail which is located in the northern region of Saudi Arabia.

Alotaibi (2017, p. 277) added that the preposition *bi-* and the article *al-* (i.e., *bil-*¹⁹) are used in their Saudi dialect data to introduce *marrāh* and to express the meaning of “majority”. Therefore, based on these shreds of evidence, we can speculate that the loss of *bil-* signified a transition into its function from a maximiser into a booster. This progression could be found at least in ND in Riyadh based on the current data and may not be used in other Arabic varieties, as the progression of linguistic elements may vary from variety to variety (Woidich, 1996). Further investigations must be carried out to support this observation. As highlighted above, maximisers often gradually lose their force that marks the highest point on a scale and become used merely to boost or mark a high point on a scale. In the current data, for adjective amplification, no tokens of *bilmarrāh* were recorded. Yet, one token was recorded for verb amplification from a participant who is 63 years old with the verb *ʔxtalaf* ‘it changed’ (see Example 5a).

In the Arabic language, *marrāh* is originally a numeral adverb meaning *once*. It is through “divergence” where less-grammatical elements in language, such as the numeral adverb *once*, diverge or split into two variants with two functions (Hopper & Traugott, 1993, p. 115). Its original form, function, and characteristics are maintained while the new variant acquires a new function and becomes more grammaticalised and used in new contexts. The numeral adverb still coexists with the amplifier form in ND and other varieties that use this amplifier. Another function that is parallel to its usage as a maximiser is the usage of *bilmarrāh* in negative contexts, which functions as a minimiser (see Example 5b). However, there appears to be an additional form of *marrāh* that could have preceded its evolution into an intensifier (maximiser), which can possibly explain the shift from a numeral adverb into an amplifier. *bilmarrāh* ‘all at once’ is used in ND and many other Arabic varieties in contexts like Example 5c. Thus, the evolution of *marrāh* appears to be similar to the development depicted in Figure 2.

- (5) a. *al-jawhar* *ʔxtalaf* *bil-marrāh*
 ART-essence.M.SG changed.M.3SG ADV.completely
 ‘The essence changed completely’
- b. *kalām* *ġēr* *ṣaḥīḥ* *bil-marrāh*
 INDEF.speech not INDEF.correct.M.ADJ at all
 ‘The speech is not correct at all’ or ‘the speech is completely incorrect’
- c. *hī* *ʔaṣlan* *rāyḥah* *ʕumrah* *w-* *zyārat*
 3.FEM ADV-originally Go.PRS.FEM INDEF.Umrah and INDEF-visit.F.SG
ʔahlahā *w-* *bil-marrāh* *thḍar* *al-mubārāh*
 Family-POSS.3.FEM and at once 3SG.attend ART-match
 ‘She’s originally going for Umrah and visiting her family and at the same time, she’ll attend the match’

Figure2

Grammaticalisation Stages of marrāh



The booster *jiddan* (see Example 6), which is shared with CA, is derived from the lexical root *jidd*, which means “strain or force in the accomplishment of an action” (Feodorov,

¹⁹ Examples 5b and 5c were elicited from X (previously: Twitter) from ND speakers (based on the tribe in their username and their location in Saudi Arabia).

2000, p. 2). This meaning underwent a process of expansion to include concepts that are abstract, like significance and seriousness. After that, with increased usage of this word, it lost its semantic content and has now become semantically bleached (for a detailed explanation about this process see Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005). Before its grammaticalisation, *jiddan* was a verbal noun in the accusative form (i.e., cognate object). Typically, these forms are used to add emphasis to their neighbouring verbs. *jiddan* belongs to a group of intensifiers, emphasisers, and focus markers like the approximator *taqrīban* ‘nearly’, the maximiser *tamaman* ‘completely’, the emphasiser *fiḥlan* ‘really’, and the focus marker *tabḥan* ‘of course, surely, indeed’. These items are characterised by their fossilised status. They are frozen in the accusative form, and it is well-known that the case system is only maintained in CA and has been lost in most Arabic varieties (Versteegh, 2014). This preservation could be a result of their higher usage. The trajectory of the grammaticalisation of such items follows a typical route where elements from major categories like nouns and verbs develop into elements of minor categories like adverbs (Hopper & Traugott, 1993).

- (6) *ṣrnā* *yaṣnī* *jiddan* *ṣaḥyyīn*
 became.1PL.PST mean.DM very superficial. PL.ADJ
 ‘We became I mean very superficial’

šwayy ‘a little’ and *kiḏā* ‘sort of’ were the most common downtoners in the data; therefore, I will try to give some brief background about their origin and grammaticalisation in this and the following paragraphs. The diminisher *šwayy* (see Example 7a) is used in ND for several functions including its function as a quantifier (see Examples 7b-7c). *šwayy* is the diminutive form of *šayy* ‘thing’ in the Arabic language. This suggests that *šwayy* ‘little thing’ grammaticalised based on its diminutive status to function as the quantifier ‘little’. The grammaticalisation of *šwayy* from a noun to an adverb that is semantically empty is a typical grammaticalisation trajectory. Like what is observed in *jiddan*, words from major categories like nouns shift into minor categories like adverbs, and in this case, take the grammatical form of quantifiers (see Hopper & Traugott, 1993). Intensifiers often develop from quantifiers such as *little* in the English language. Similar to the grammaticalisation of *marrāh*, a process of divergence must have occurred where a split in the function of this word took place, and the quantifier still coexists with the downtoner in ND and many other Arabic varieties (Hopper & Traugott, 1993).

- (7) a. *šdayyid* *šwayy* *jšlah* *fī* *al-jannah*
 Strict.SG.ADJ little may. MS.PST.SUBJ in.LOC heaven.N
 ‘(He was) a little strict may (God) grant him heaven’
 b. *majmūšah* *mn* *al-nās* *ʔaw* *ṭabaqah*
 INDEF.group.F.SG from ART-People Or INDEF.class.F.SG
kbīrah *tarā* *ma-ḥnā* *mū* *šwayyīn*
 INDEF.large.ADJ.F.SG DM not-we not INDEF.little.ADJ
 ‘A large group of people let me tell you we’re not few’
 c. *ʕ-al-ʔaqall* *ṣaṭānā* *yaṣnī* *šwayy* *maʕlūmāt*
 At least gave. M.3SG DM a bit INDEF. Information.PL
 ‘At least it gave us a bit of information’

The compromiser *kiḏā* (see Example 8) is analogous to *(hā)kaḏā* in CA. It consists of three elements: *hā-ka-ḏā* (Omar, 2008). The particle *hā-* is used for attention seeking, *ka-* functions as an analogy particle, and *ḏā* is a demonstrative. Thus, *kiḏā* in ND is used to make

an analogy-like meaning (i.e. like this or in this way). In using the downtoner *kidā*, no true analogy is made by comparing two elements. Yet, it is used to create “informational vagueness” (see Voghera & Collu, 2017, p. 379). Vagueness is created via the absence of the other side of the comparison. According to König (2017, p. 17), compromisers are “cautious, metalinguistic assessments of degrees expressing quantitative restrictions”. Therefore, when the speaker uses *kidā* to modify an adjective, they are cautiously assessing the similarity between the quality they are describing and the quality of the modified adjective. König (2017) adds that intensification involves the cognitive process of comparison to a norm. That is why we see many forms of comparison used for intensification, such as demonstratives, which is the case in *kidā*.

- (8) *ḥadīqah* *maṭalan* *tkūn* *b-* *ṭābiʿ* *kidā* *muxtalif*
 Park.F.SG for example be with character.SG sort of different.ADJ
 ‘A park, for example, that has a character that is sort of different.’

Conclusion

This study attempted to uncover characteristics of the adjective intensification system used by ND speakers in Riyadh. This investigation looked at the rate of adjective amplification, moderation, and unintensification in ND and compared those to the available literature on Arabic intensifiers. It also sheds some light on the common intensification forms in ND in relation to grammaticalisation theories. In the data, we found that the rate of adjective amplification in ND was overall lower than what was recorded in the AA adjective amplification system. When looking at each subcategory separately, amplification in ND was higher than adjective moderation. In addition, adjective boosters were found to be used more frequently than maximisers. This study also briefly explored several of the common forms in the data. It specifically highlighted how some of these forms came into use as intensifiers through the process of grammaticalisation.

The current study is limited in geographical scope (i.e., Riyadh city) and the context it investigates (i.e., adjective modification). Therefore, the current data is by no means comprehensive of all the intensification forms in ND. Future research could benefit from exploring other places in the Najd area and other contexts such as verb modification. Moreover, other data sources like written forms of ND could be used to uncover the effect of variations in the usage of adjective intensifiers between written and spoken ND. There are still features of intensifiers in ND that ought to be highlighted such as the position of intensifiers around the modified adjective and their iteration and co-occurrence, which are left out due to the limited scope of the current paper. There is also a need to investigate intensifiers found in ND that are shared with CA which could be conducted using available corpora of CA. Factors that affect the employment of intensifiers, especially those shared with CA such as the educational level of speakers and the level of formality of the register, have yet to be unpacked but will be explored in future parts of this project. Future research on the adjective intensification systems in other Arabic varieties is also still needed.

This study establishes the foundation for future explorations and documentation of intensifiers in the Arabic language where there is a scarcity of research covering this linguistic area in spoken varieties. Furthermore, this study could be of significance to research on the acquisition of intensifiers by L1 and L2 learners of ND. This investigation is also deemed significant and essential across various disciplinary areas like translation studies, socio-pragmatics, and theoretical linguistics.

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Bio

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Appendix A
Transliteration System (Adapted from Dickins, 2020)

Arabic Letter	Transliteration	Arabic Letter	Transliteration
Consonants			
ء	ʔ	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ḏ
ث	ṯ	ع	ʿ
ج	j	غ	ġ
ح	ḥ	ل (emphatic)	ḷ
خ	x	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	ḏ	ه	h
ر	r	و (consonantal)	w
ز	z	ي (consonantal)	y
س	s		
ش	š		
ص	ṣ		
Vowels			
اَ	a	اَيَّ as a monophthong (front, mid, unrounded, long vowel)	ē
اِ	i	اَيَّ (diphthong)	ay
اُ	u	اَو as a monophthong (back, mid, rounded, long vowel)	ō
اَآ	ā	اَو (diphthong)	aw
اُو	ū	اِي (? <i>alif maqṣūrah</i>)	ā
اِي	ī		

Other sounds or features	
Definite Article الـ	Always used as <i>al-</i> for simplicity
<i>šaddah</i>	Double consonant
<i>nisbah</i> suffix	-ī (with feminine singular <i>-iyyah</i> , masculine plural <i>-iyyīn</i> , and feminine plural <i>-iyyāt</i>)
English words	Written in English spelling (not transliterated)

Appendix B

Interview Questions (Arabic Version)

أسئلة جديدة

1. هل تعتقد أن المجتمع السعودي يعاني من العنصرية؟
2. كساكن في مدينة الرياض، هل تعتقد أنه يوجد فرق في الطبقة الاجتماعية بين أحياء مدينة الرياض؟
3. ما أكثر شيء تنتقده أو تود تغييره في المجتمع السعودي؟
4. هل دور المرأة في المجتمع السعودي الآن مثل ما كان في السابق؟
5. ما رأيك في التعليم الإلكتروني؟ ماهي إيجابياته وسلبياته؟
6. هل تعتقد أن دمج المقررات الإسلامية قرار صائب؟
7. هل تعتقد أن تمكن الناس الآن من اللغة العربية الفصحى في المملكة مثل مستوى تمكنهم في السابق؟
8. ما رأيك بإعادة مقرر الخط العربي للمناهج السعودية؟
9. هل تؤيد استخدام اللهجة السعودية في مجالات معينة مثل الإعلانات والتسويق والسياحة؟
10. هل تعتقد انه من المناسب تدريس اللهجة السعودية للأجانب (بالإضافة للغة عربية الفصحى)؟ (إذا كان جوابك نعم فأبي لهجة نختار للتدريس؟)
11. هل تعتقد أن الناس يتأثرون بمشاهير السوشل ميديا؟
12. كيف تواجه غلاء الأسعار؟ هل تقاطع المنتجات التي ارتفع سعرها؟
13. هل سبق ومررت بموقف اقتربت فيه من الموت؟
14. هل سبق وكتبت تعهد أو حصلت لك مشكلة في المدرسة؟
15. ما لشيء الذي ستذكره دائما عن أزمة كورونا؟
16. ما هو أصعب قرار اتخذته في حياتك؟

أسئلة غير جديدة

1. وش أكثر شيء تحبه /تكرهه في الرياض؟
2. هل حصل لك موقف ما تنساه مع اوبر؟ وش حصل؟
3. هل فيه 'مثل' دايماً ترده (أو أحد من أفراد عائلتك يرده)؟ متى تقولونه؟
4. وش روتينكم في الأعياد؟ هل روتينكم الآن نفس لما كنتم صغاراً؟
5. وش اللعبة اللي كنت تحب تلعبها يوم كنت صغيراً؟
6. هل تحب التسوق الإلكتروني؟ لماذا؟ وش أكثر شيء تشتريه أون لاين؟
7. وش أفضل وقت عندك في اليوم؟ وش تسوي فيه عادة؟
8. هل فيه عادة ودك مره تكتسيها؟ حاولت؟ ليش هذي العادة بالضبط؟ هل فيه عادة ودك تتخلص منها؟
9. هل عندك هوايات؟ وش تسوي في وقت فراغك؟
10. هل تحب الأكل في المطاعم؟ ماهو مطعمك المفضل؟ لماذا؟ صف لنا شكل المطعم. ما هو طبقك المفضل في ذلك المطعم.
11. هل انت من النوع اللي عنده أصدقاء كثير أو تفضل يكون عندك عدد محدود جدا من الأصدقاء؟ لماذا؟
12. من كان أفضل/ أسوأ أستاذ في المدرسة؟ ليش؟

Appendix C

Interview Questions (English Translation)

Serious Questions

1. Do you think Saudi society suffers from racism? Give examples, and if yes, how can we eliminate it?
2. As a resident of Riyadh, do you think that there is a difference in the social class of people based on their neighbourhood?
3. What is the one thing that you would like to change in Saudi society?
4. Is the role of women in the society now the same as it was in the past?
5. What do you think about online learning? What are its advantages and disadvantages?
6. Do you think combining the Islamic courses into one book was the right decision?
7. Do you think that people's competence of CA is the same as that of previous generations in Saudi Arabia?
8. What is your opinion about re-introducing the orthography course in the Saudi curricula?
9. Do you support using the Saudi dialect for specific purposes, such as marketing, advertisements and tourism?
10. Do you think that teaching the Saudi dialect to foreigners (in addition to CA) is appropriate? (If yes, then which dialect should be taught?)
11. Do you think that people are affected by social media influencers?
12. How do you face the increase in prices? Do you stop buying the goods with an increased price?
13. Have you ever been in a situation where you almost died?
14. Have you ever got into trouble in school?
15. From your experience, what is the one thing that you will always remember about this pandemic?
16. What's the most difficult decision you have ever taken?

Non-serious Questions

1. What do you like/hate the most about Riyadh?
2. Is there any Uber trip that you cannot forget? Tell us about it.
3. Is there a certain proverb that you (or any member of your family) always use? When do you use it?
4. What is your routine during Eid? Is your routine now similar to when you were kids?
5. What was your favourite game as a kid?
6. Do you like online shopping? Why? what do you usually buy?
7. What is your favourite time of the day? What do you do at that time?
8. What is the habit that you would like to develop? Did you try? Why this habit specifically?
9. Do you have hobbies? What do you like to do in your free time? (if you have any)
10. Do you like eating out? What is your favourite restaurant? Why? Describe it. What is your favourite dish at that restaurant?
11. Do you like to have many friends, or you are the kind of person who prefers to have limited number of friends?
12. Who was your favourite/least favourite teacher in school? Why?