



**Journal of
Research In Language &
Translation**

ISSN 1658-9246

JRLT@ksu.edu.sa

Published by King Saud University, Refereed Academic Periodical

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Editorial Preface

Welcome to the latest issue of the *Journal of Research in Language and Translation*, a platform dedicated to fostering interdisciplinary research and dialogue in the fields of linguistics, translation studies, and language education. This issue brings together a rich tapestry of research articles that delve into various aspects of language and translation, with a particular focus on the Saudi Arabian context.

Our first paper, "Exploring Dialogism in Newspaper Articles by Male and Female Writers: An Analysis of Saudi Women's Empowerment from the Perspective of the Engagement System of the Appraisal Theory," offers a nuanced look at gender dynamics in Saudi media. The paper employs the Engagement System of the Appraisal Theory to analyze how male and female writers construct dialogic spaces in newspaper articles, particularly in relation to the topic of women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia.

The second article, "The Effect of Regional Dialects on Arabic Vowels in Saudi Arabia," takes us on a journey through the phonetic landscape of Saudi Arabia. This research contributes to our understanding of how regional dialects can influence the pronunciation of Arabic vowels, thereby enriching the existing literature on Arabic phonology.

Our third paper, "Self-Organized Learning and its Relationship with Self-Efficacy among Saudi EFL Female Preparatory-Year Students," explores the fascinating intersection of self-organized learning and self-efficacy. The study focuses on female students in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) preparatory year, shedding light on how self-organized learning strategies can impact their academic self-efficacy.

The fourth article, "Attitudes Towards Euphemistic Codeswitching in Job Titles in the Saudi Context," delves into the sociolinguistic realm by examining the attitudes of individuals towards the use of euphemistic codeswitching in job titles. This paper provides valuable insights into how language choices in professional settings can reflect broader social and cultural norms.

Finally, "English as a Medium of Education (EME): Gender, Attitudes, and Cumulative GPA" investigates the role of English as a medium of instruction in Saudi educational institutions. The paper examines how gender, attitudes towards English, and academic performance are interrelated, providing a comprehensive view of the complexities involved in language education policies.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the authors, reviewers, and editorial team members who have contributed to this issue. Your dedication and rigorous scholarship continue to make this journal a leading voice in the field of language and translation studies. We hope that the research presented in this issue will inspire further inquiry and discussion among scholars, educators, and practitioners alike.

Editor

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October 1, 2023

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Exploring Dialogism in Newspaper Articles by Male and Female Writers: An Analysis of Saudi Women's Empowerment from the Perspective of the Engagement System of the Appraisal Theory

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Received: 26/4/2023; Revised: 9/6/2023; Accepted: 13/06/2022

الملخص

تركز الدراسة الحالية على استخدامات الصيغ اللغوية المتعددة في مقالات مجلة عرب نيوز حول تمكين المرأة في المملكة العربية السعودية. كما توضح هذه الدراسة بشكل خاص كيف يعبر الصحفيون عن مواقفهم فيما يتعلق بموضوع تمكين المرأة في المملكة العربية السعودية وكيف يتفاعل الصحفيون الذكور والإناث على حد سواء مع تمكين المرأة السعودية باستخدام (نظام المشاركة) كجزء من (نظرية التقييم) التي قدمها مارتين ووايت عام (2005). تركز هذه النظرية على استخدام المعاني الضمنية التي توجه لغة الخطاب ليكون أكثر نقداً، أو تقييماً، أو قبولاً، أو رفضاً، أو مناقشةً لوجهات النظر الأخرى المذكورة في المقالات. أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن أكثر المفردات التشاركية المستخدمة في المقالات متعلقة بـ (الإمتنان) و(التأييد) و(التضائل) مما يدل على أن صحيفة عرب نيوز تقدر رأي المصادر الأخرى المدرجة في مقالاتها. علاوةً على ذلك فقد استخدمت الصحفيات الكثير من مفردات (الإمتنان) بينما استخدم الصحفيون الكثير من مفردات (التأييد) و(التضائل). وبشكل عام فقد استخدم الكتاب في مقالاتهم ثلاث مصادر للتفاعل وتقديم آراء أخرى تدعم تمكين المرأة في المملكة العربية السعودية. تعتبر هذه الدراسة هي الأولى من نوعها في مناقشة موضوع تمكين المرأة السعودية في الإعلام السعودي حتى الآن. كما يوصي الباحثون بإجراء دراسات أخرى حول موضوع تمكين المرأة السعودية باستخدام مجلات أخرى أو مقالات من أعمدة مختلفة من صحيفة عرب نيوز. كذلك فإن هذه الدراسة تساهم في فهم المعاني الضمنية في الخطاب الإخباري في المملكة العربية السعودية من منظور وظيفي لنظرية التقييم.



Abstract

The present study focuses on the uses of heteroglossic formulations in the Arab News Journal articles about women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia. More specifically, this study explains how journalists show their position regarding women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia and how male/female journalists engage with Saudi women's empowerment by using the Engagement system features. Appraisal theory was employed in the present study because it focuses on interpersonal meanings that provide writers and speakers with the means to be critical, and value, reject, accept, and challenge other positions mentioned in the articles. The findings revealed that the highest number of engagement instances are specifically acknowledgment, endorsement, and contractions resources which shows that the journal admits and appreciates the other sources included in the articles. Moreover, female writers utilized more acknowledgment resources while male journalists used more endorsement and contraction resources. Thus, the authors mostly employed three engagement features to attribute other stances in their articles supporting women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, they are recognizing and appreciating Saudi women's empowerment. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first of its kind to investigate Saudi women's empowerment in the Saud media. Studies on the same topic using other journals or different columns are recommended. The study contributes some understanding of interpersonal meaning in the news discourse in Saudi Arabia from the functional perspective of appraisal theory.

Keywords: dialogism in media; heteroglossic engagement; heteroglossic formulations; Saudi women's empowerment

Introduction

Newspaper articles are a kind of discourse where writers can provide persuasive, provoking, logical, and objective ideas. These communicative contexts can address the audience and have their objectives (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). In other words, authors can present their ideas in an engaging, convincing, and negotiating manner to convey their aims through the texts. Although there are different sources and platforms of information nowadays, people still seek out newspaper articles whether they are online or printed. Moreover, newspaper journals still have an important effect on people as they can greatly influence readers. Therefore, readers may change their beliefs, ideas, opinions, or behaviors according to what they read in them (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Montgomery, 2011; Quinn & Lambie, 2008).

Newspaper discourse attracts the interest of many linguists, as it is widely studied. White (2012) was the first to employ in his doctoral dissertation the appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005) to study news discourse. In his study, White suggested that the interpersonal types of news discourse are composed of social assessments of information and attitudes towards these meanings of authors and readers. White (2012) examined online and hard versions of English language news journals and found that the most frequent engagement formulations are attribution whereby authors present their viewpoints from external sources, employing “quoted source, whose observations, interpretations, beliefs and opinions are apparently being passed on to the media audience” (p. 1). Attributions are indirect appraisal mechanisms for journalists to reinforce their points.

Later, many research studies utilized Martin and White’s (2005) appraisal framework in newspaper articles (e.g. Huan, 2016; Huang, 2020; Jin, 2019; Jullian, 2011; Puspita & Pranoto, 2021; White, 2012). However, most of them focused on the systems of Attitude and Graduation (Jin, 2019; Liu & Stevenson, 2013; Puspita & Pranoto, 2021; Zhang, 2015). Some studies investigated feminism in media discourse (Abdel-motaleb, 2017a, 2017b; Fathallah & Al Khazraji, 2022), employing appraisal framework. Other studies explored the linguistic violence against women in the press (José & Sergio, 2014; Marsakawati, 2016) using the Attitude system. While Ponton (2010) applied the appraisal system in the examination of Margaret Thatcher’s political speech, Mayo and Taboada (2017) employed Attitude and Graduation systems in their investigation of political articles addressing women.

The number of studies on the Engagement system in newspaper articles is limited (Fitriani, 2021; Huan, 2016; Huang, 2020; Jullian, 2011). Fitriani (2021), for example, employed the Engagement system to investigate online newspaper articles written by eight female journalists on crime and law, politics, environmental issues, health and lifestyles, and education. This study demonstrates that the most frequent engagement features were disclaiming and entertaining features. The articles were from the opinion column in the journals, discussing different topics of politics, such as crime, law, health, lifestyle, education, and environmental issues. Therefore, female authors tend to show their voices as supporting or disagreeing with others or persuading readers with their personal subjective opinions, and the fewest number of features were proclaiming features.

There are relatively few studies that examined newspaper articles about women, employing the Appraisal theory which is based on Halliday’s (2004) systemic functional linguistics (SFL). To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, there are only two studies that

investigated the differences between male and female styles in writing newspaper articles about women (Faiqiyah et al., 2022; Sutherland & Adendorff, 2014). Faiqiyah et al. (2022) investigated the appraisal features in newspaper articles about women written by two Indonesian authors, a male writer and a female writer. The investigation of the engagement resources revealed that the female author did not use contractive formulations in the text while the male writer used many. Faiqiyah et al. (2022) argue that the male author's usage of contractive resources reflects the tendency to oppose, show disagreement, or forbid something. The study also demonstrates that the female author used acknowledge formulations more than the male author which shows that women try to make connections between themselves and the outside voices that they have cited. These findings, however, are not reliable because the data included only two newspaper articles.

Similarly, Sutherland and Adendorff (2014) explored only three texts about Women's Day in South Africa by two female writers and a male journalist. The results showed that female authors used acknowledgment and endorsement patterns while the male author used more countering features. According to Sutherland and Adendorff, the authors' usage of engagement resources perfectly served the aim of their articles; that is, to raise the audience's attention to issues facing women in South Africa. Investigations of the Engagement system of the appraisal framework in newspaper articles about women's empowerment did not seem to attract the attention of researchers. Such investigation is pertinent since it reveals the newspaper writer's interpersonal standing towards women's empowerment. The system of Engagement (monogloss-heterogloss) within the appraisal framework offers a more helpful tool for our purposes. While monoglossic resources do not explicitly reference other viewpoints or voices, heteroglossic formulations invoke for dialogistic alternatives. Heteroglossically formulated propositions are concerned with whether the author's stance is dialogistically contractive or expansive. On the contrary, the propositions in monoglossic formulations are either 'taken-for-granted' or treated as 'at issue,' i.e. writers show no engagement with other viewpoints, and that's why the present study placed greater focus on the uses of heteroglossia.

Women in Saudi Arabia have gained great international attention in the world news due to the successful developments in the last six years in Saudi Arabia by King Salman bin Abdulaziz AL Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. Being under the world's media spotlight puts more pressure on Saudi media to objectively show this effective change to the world. In Saudi Arabia, there are many newspapers that are for English-speaking audiences. How can these journals reflect their point of view about women's empowerment and change in the Saudi society?

In particular, the use of engagement resources in Saudi newspaper articles has not been investigated. The present study focused on the Engagement system in its investigation of women's empowerment in Saudi newspaper articles because it attends to the various authorial voices and opinions in discourse and how the author's voice is positioned in relation to the propositions conveyed by the text. Therefore, as far as we are aware, there are no studies on the use of the Engagement system in Saudi newspaper articles related to women's empowerment. Thus, this study contributes the literature specific to this theme and context. The present study investigated the use of dialogic linguistic features in articles written by male/female authors about Saudi women's empowerment published in the Arab News Journal, a Saudi English-language journal. It aimed to explore the dialogic (heteroglossic) linguistic

features that are used to engage the putative readers of Arab News Journal about Saudi women-themed articles.

More specifically, the present study aimed to explore the use of engagement resources when demonstrating to readers this impressive development in Saudi Arabia. In this study, the researchers examined 10 recent articles related to Saudi women's empowerment published in a Saudi newspaper, Arab News, from 2020 to 2022. Arab News Journal was selected because it is the first English-language daily newspaper in Saudi Arabia and has over 10 million monthly readers (Arab News, 2023). Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory was employed as a research framework since it proved its effectiveness in analyzing interpersonal meaning in different types of discourse such as literary works, media, legal, scientific, and academic discourse (Fryer, 2013; Huang, 2020; Hyland, 2005; Poole et al., 2019; Shen & Tao, 2021). More specifically, the researchers utilized the system of Engagement to investigate the engagement resources employed by male/female authors about Saudi women's empowerment in Arab News articles. Therefore, this study attempted to answer the following two questions:

1. What linguistic features of the Engagement system (monogloss and heterogloss) are disseminated in Saudi newspaper articles written by male/female writers about woman empowerment?

2. How do the male/female writers in the Saudi newspaper articles about woman empowerment differ in their use of engagement resources?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the appraisal framework was employed to analyze the corpus. The appraisal framework was developed by Martin and White (2005) within Halliday's (2004) SFL to map out the resources that can be used to provide value to social experiences. According to Halliday (2004), language is a network of systems that provide meanings, and they are ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. The ideational meaning is related to human ideas and experience while the interpersonal meaning refers to feelings and attitudes and, finally, the textual refers to the organization of ideas and feelings in a connected, meaningful text. That is, language is used to convey people's feelings, attitudes, and judgments about others or things they talk about. Since SFL focuses on language use and language function, it is a useful tool for analyzing texts and newspaper discourse through the application of the appraisal framework (Puspita & Pranoto, 2021).

The appraisal framework is a system of interpersonal meanings. It is concerned with investigating the degree of the writer's engagement with the writer's prior beliefs and values. Moreover, it explores how writers position themselves with other values and beliefs, for example, standing with or without, being neutral or undecided. In addition, what they are trying to convey to readers, and how? In other words, the appraisal framework "is directed towards providing a systematic account of how such positioning is achieved linguistically" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 93). Martin and Rose (2008, p. 117) added that it is concerned with "the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned." Consequently, the appraisal theory is the most suitable theory to investigate the news discourse, more specifically exploring the authorial stance and how journalists engage their interpersonal meanings and beliefs with their readers.

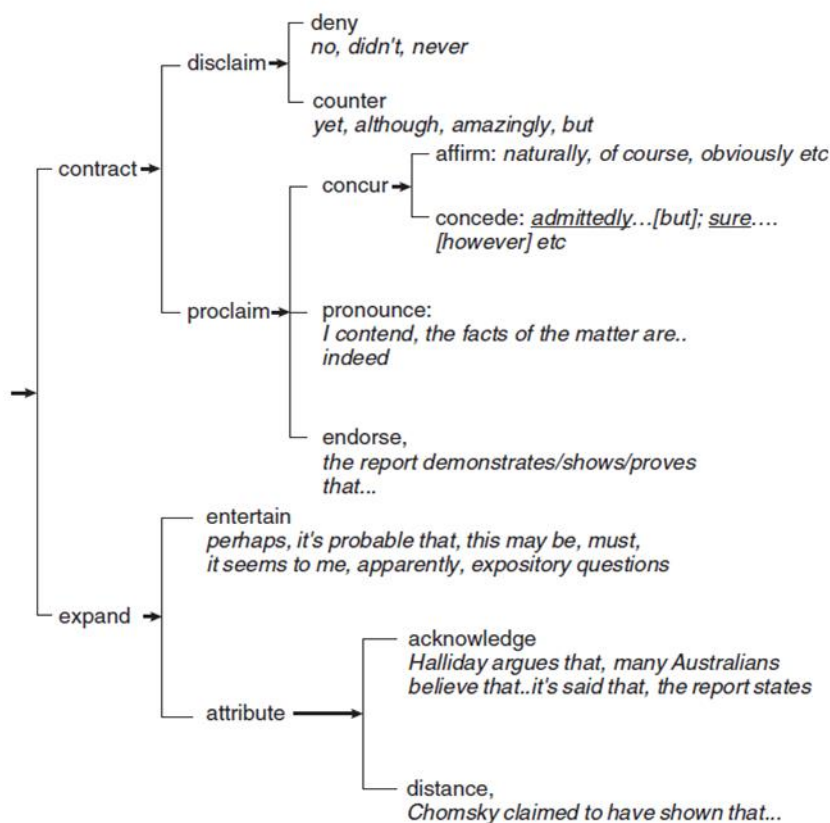
This framework is employed in the present study to investigate the interpersonal meanings conveyed by the authors' use of words in the *Arab News Journal*.

The appraisal framework is constituted of three systems: (a) Engagement, (b) Attribution and (c) Graduation (Martin & White, 2005). For the purpose of this study, we are concerned with the Engagement system since it reveals the “meanings by which speaker/writer engages dialogistically with prior speakers on the same subject and anticipates potential responses” (White, 2012, p. 59). The Engagement system includes linguistic resources that writers use to show their position toward the values demonstrated in a text, taking into account their readers. As stated earlier, the Engagement system is divided into two main categories: monoglossic and heteroglossic formulations. Monoglossic means that the writer does not explicitly reference other voices or viewpoints while heteroglossic includes all resources that allow for other voices or viewpoints in the discourse. A monoglossically asserted proposition includes bare assertions, and it is “presented as very much in the spotlight – as very much a focal point for discussion and argumentation” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 101).

Within heteroglossic features, there are two broad categories: “contract” and “expand” as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Engagement System: Contract and Expand Features (Martin & White, 2005, p. 134)



Contraction includes all instances that challenge or shut down any other dialogic stances while expansion includes the instances that allow for alternative dialogic stances. Under the contraction category, there are two subcategories (or contractive meanings) which are (1) “disclaim” and (2) “proclaim.” Within disclaim there are two other subtypes: “deny” through the use of negation (e.g., ‘no,’ ‘not,’ ‘never’) and “counter” through concession/counter-

expectation resources (e.g., ‘but,’ ‘while,’ ‘whereas,’ ‘even though’). The authorial voice in a disclaim statement directly rejects or overrules other voices. Under proclaim category, there are four subtypes which are (1) “concur,” (2) “pronounce,” (3) “endorse,” and (4) “justify” by which the authorial voice limits or challenges other voices. Huan (2016) argues that these four features are “relevant to the study of journalists engaging authorial and non-authorial voices” (p. 5). Concur features demonstrate that the author is agreeing with the other stance such as the use of ‘admittedly’ and ‘certainly.’ Pronouncement refers to overtly presenting the author’s voice such as ‘declare’ and ‘contend.’ It differs from endorsement which means that the authorial voice accepts and validates other external voices such as the use of ‘demonstrates’ and ‘shows.’ However, justify is not mentioned in the original diagram in Figure 1, but it is mentioned in White (2003). It is also included in the UAM Corpus Tool built-in scheme, and it will be investigated as well in this study. By the use of justify, the author gives a justification of the stances mentioned in his/her text such as the use of ‘thus’ and ‘since.’

The second broad category in the Engagement system is expansion which is divided into two subtypes “entertain” and “attribute.” Regarding the former, it refers to the likelihood of the author’s stance, and it includes modality and evidentials (e.g., ‘may,’ ‘must,’ ‘perhaps,’ ‘seem,’ ‘suggest,’ ‘apparently’). Attribution resources represent the proposition as “grounded in the subjectivity of an external voice, the textual voice represents the proposition as but one of a range of possible positions” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 98). Attribution includes formulations that involve process verbs (e.g., said, argues) and nominalizations (e.g., belief, assertions), and various adverbial adjuncts (e.g., according to, X’s view). The attribution category is divided into “acknowledge” and “distance.” By the use of acknowledgment features, writers choose to show their position, or they do not according to the proposition in their writing such as the use of ‘say,’ ‘believe,’ and ‘report.’ By the use of distance, the author explicitly distances his voice from the material provided such as the use of ‘claim’ and ‘allege.’ Distancing formulations are seen as dialogically expansive because they allow for alternative dialogic stances.

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-method research design was adopted to answer the two research questions. This design combines elements of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in one or more stages of the research project (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Dörnyei & Griffee, 2010). Therefore, using qualitative methods can overcome the abstract statistical characteristics of quantitative research by adding more depth and meaning to the results. Thus, a more in-depth exploration of the engagement resources used in news discourse is presented, with a focus on the subsystem of heterogloss. Also, using mixed methods enhances the validity of the research and provides a greater possibility of legitimizing results than either quantitative or qualitative data alone. Researchers can assess the findings from both data types by triangulation which means the use of multiplex sources of data or multiple research techniques (Mackey & Gass, 2021).

Mixed methods designs can fall under the epistemic approach, which is concerned with the way knowledge is conveyed. According to Van Dijk (2013, p. 497), understanding sources of knowledge and how they are presented in news discourse is relevant to epistemic discourse

analysis, which can be defined as the “systematic and explicit study of the ways knowledge is interactively managed (activated, expressed, presupposed, implied, conveyed, construed, etc.) in the structures and strategies of text and talk.” The epistemic analysis of news discourse is closely linked to the analysis of how journalists position themselves in relation to news knowledge (Huan, 2016).

Data

Ten newspaper articles were extracted from Arab News newspaper according to the keywords “Saudi woman - Saudi woman empowerment.” Arab News was founded in 1975 and has become the Middle East’s leading English daily (Arab News, 2023). It is one of more than 30 outlets by the Saudi Research and Publishing Company (SRPC), a subsidiary of the Saudi Research and Media Group (SRMG). Arab News has an electronic website and since 2016, it has launched three full-fledged country editions in Pakistan, Japan, and France “to become popular not only among Saudi Arabia's society and the Arab World but also reaching policymakers and business leaders in the United States and the United Kingdom making it one of the primary sources in the Arab World to be quoted by US and UK media outlets and policymakers” (Arab News, 2023). Moreover, in 2018 Arab News has adopted a new motto presented on the official website “the voice of a changing region” to demonstrate its goal and mission. Many Articles were published about Saudi women and Saudi woman’s empowerment. However, our corpus of articles is concerned with the most recent period from November 2020 to January 2023. Thus, this justifies why the second corpus is bigger than the first., as whatever is written in this period about women’s empowerment was selected. The articles were written by five female journalists and five male journalists as shown in Table 1. The articles are related to famous and important people in Saudi society, praising and celebrating the change in women’s position in Saudi Arabia.

Table 1*The Dataset of the Study According to the Publication Date and Gender*

	Articles written by male authors	Publication Date	Author	No. of words
1	Empower alliance hails ‘remarkable year for women’s empowerment	18 November 2020	Rashid Hassan	302
2	Saudi UN mission hails Kingdom’s successes in empowering women	10 March 2021	Ephrem Kossaify	740
3	Women set to take over admin duties in all Saudi personal status courts	3 January 2022	Mohammed Alkinani	611
4	Saudi Arabia focused on ‘real empowerment of women,’ says Kingdom’s UN envoy	26 June 2022	Hebshi Alshammari	813
5	Saudi women thriving in the diplomatic service	16 January 2023	Hassan Almustafa	907
Total number of words				3,373
	Articles written by female authors	Publication Date	Author	No. of words
1	Qiyadat Global-Georgetown program ‘empowers women to lead around the world	13 Feb 2021	Lama Alhamawi	1159
2	An exemplar of Saudi Arabia’s progress in women’s economic inclusion and empowerment	4 March 2021	Caline Malek	1,269
3	How higher education bolstered women’s empowerment in Saudi Arabia	7 March 2022	Nada Hameed	1,098
4	International Women’s Day: The march of female empowerment in Saudi Arabia	8 March 2022	Rebecca Anne Proctor	1,207
5	A new dawn for Saudi diwaniya: AmCham holds its first Women in Business committee meeting	25 February 2022	Jasmine Bager	622
Total number of words				5,355
Subtotal number of words				8,728

Data Analysis Tools

For analyzing the articles, the UAM Corpus Tool 3.3 version was used. It is a semi-automatic annotation and free- open-source tool (O'Donnell, 2011). There are many versions of this tool, but for this study, the older offline version 3.3 was used since version 6 does not provide all the features such as saving and exporting data, and it needs more improvements. A manual annotation of each engagement feature was conducted since the provided engagement layer is not yet automatic. Thus, the software suggested tags were selected from a drop-down menu after being reviewed by considering the context surrounding each engagement feature to prevent any incorrect annotations. UAM tool provides various useful text analysis tools, including a statistics section, which allows the researcher to automatically calculate the frequency of annotated features. This function can be very useful for improving internal consistency and speeding up the annotation process (Fuoli, 2018).

Data Analysis Procedures

The annotation procedure included a number of steps. First, the articles were cleaned to exclude any remarks and banners made by the journal other than the authors. As the second research question aimed to reveal the differences in the use of engagement formulations by male/female newspaper writers, the two datasets were divided into two text files: articles written by female journalists and articles by male journalists. The files were then uploaded to the UAM Corpus Tool software. The analysis was conducted through a built-in manual appraisal analysis of the engagement scheme without any modifications to the scheme since we used the 3.3 version. As stated earlier, the engagement items were identified and assigned features in each dataset.

Descriptive and contrastive statistics were extracted from the UAM tool. This included frequencies and percentages of the occurrence of each item of the engagement formulations in the whole dataset. In each dataset, the percentage of the occurrence of each engagement type was calculated based on the total instances of the engagement resources to validate claims such 'more' and 'fewer.' Afterward, a contrastive descriptive analysis was applied to each dataset separately (See 4.2). Since the datasets are not comparable in terms of word count, the frequency of each engagement item was normalized by calculating the frequency per 1,000 words (Bestgen, 2020). To calculate the frequency per 1,000 words, data was transferred to UAM Tool version 6 as this feature is not found in version 3.3. Finally, conclusions were derived from the overall analysis of the dataset.

A reannotation procedure was applied by a fellow linguist to check consistency in the labeling of engagement resources to ensure more reliable results. Differences in coding were minimized by discussion and negotiation with the fellow linguist until a full agreement is reached. The consistency of the coding was in 94% of all the engagement items. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested an agreement level of at least 80% as a reasonable minimum. The statistical results which are generated from the UAM Corpus Tool are presented and discussed next.

Results and Discussion

The following section presents answers for the first research question: what linguistic features of the Engagement system (monogloss and heterogloss) are disseminated in Saudi

newspaper articles written by male/female writers about woman empowerment? Thus, the findings related to the use of engagement features in articles published by the Arab News Journal are presented and discussed. Section 4.2 attempts to provide answers for research question two: How do the male/female writers in the Saudi newspaper articles about woman empowerment differ in their use of engagement resources? The contrastive use of engagement features between male and female authors are presented, compared and discussed.

Engagement Features in All the Articles

The Engagement system has different resources as shown above in Figure 1. A summary table of the use of Engagement formulations in the Saudi newspaper articles written by male/female writers about woman empowerment is presented in Table 2.

The findings show that heteroglossic formulations are more frequent than monoglossic with a frequency of 72.50% (Table 2). It can be stated that all the writers preferred to use the hetroglossic propositions more than monoglossic ones. This finding indicates that journalists favored being more dialogic and open to alternative voices rather than excluding them. Of course, this is the nature of news articles to use heteroglossic features allowing engagements through dialogic formulations (White, 2012). Consequently, journals can raise the value of their work by using these features (Huan, 2016; Puspita & Pranoto, 2021).

Table 2

The Frequency of Monoglossic vs. Heteroglossic Resources of the Whole Data

Data	Monoglossic		Hetroglossic	
	No.	%	No.	%
Articles	77	27.50	203	72.50
Subtotal	280			

The monoglossically formulated propositions are presented by the newspaper writers as ‘taken-for-granted’ rather than ‘at issue.’

1. The 30-hour program intends to strengthen the knowledge of female leaders in the workplace, and guide them through practical and strategic obstacles [monoglossic]. (Alhamawi, 2021).

The proposition that there is a “30-hour program” and the deeds it intends to accomplish is uncontentious for the audience to which the text is being directed. Martin and White (2005) argues that readers who are at odds with monoglossic propositions are considered “outside the discursive community which the text constructs for itself” (p. 157).

In addition, the journalists used more dialogically expansive formulations (62.07%) than contractive (37.93%). The total number includes the use of both contractive and expansive formulations. This indicates that the journal authors’ stance is more on opening up the space for alternative voices rather than challenging or shutting them down, which serves the purpose of newspaper articles.

Table 3*The Occurrence of Hetroglossic Formulations in the Saudi Newspaper Articles*

Hetroglossic formulation	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Contract	77	37.93				
Disclaim			35	17.24		
Deny					9	4.43
Counter					26	12.81
Proclaim			42	20.69		
Concur					0	0.00
Pronounce					4	1.97
Endorse					25	12.32
Justify					13	6.40
Expand	126	62.07				
Entertain			13	6.41	13	6.41
Attribute			113	55.66		
Acknowledge					113	55.66
Distance					0	0.00
Subtotal and percentage	203	100%	203	100%	203	100%

The frequency of dialogic contractive resources (Table 3) indicates that the journalists employed more resources of proclaiming (e.g., highlight, note, point out, announce) than disclaiming (e.g., not, but, despite, still), respectively, 20.69 % and 17.24%. It seems that the writers somehow used their authorial interventions to limit the scope of alternative propositions rather than to directly reject or overrule certain alternative positions.

The most frequent proclaim category was endorsement (e.g., prove, show, highlight, note, point out), followed by justify (e.g., accordingly, as, therefore, since). It seems that the authors included a list of external voices in citation format which they endorsed and validated. Such formulations make the authors' argument strongly accepted and valid. It shows writers as completely aligned with those voices. Pronouncement is the third (e.g., announce, affirm, confirm, address, talk). Finally, there is no use of concurring resources in the articles. Within the disclaim category, the journalists employed more resources of countering which accounted for 12.81% (e.g., while, but, although, yet, just) while denying features accounted for 4.43% (e.g., no, not). The use of contractive disclaim resources, specifically countering propositions shows that the journalists are negotiating some propositions presented by them or by external voices. Moreover, it shows support for these ideas since counters align readers with these voices rather than disaligning them because they "construe the writer as sharing this axiological paradigm with the reader" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 121). This result is consistent with Huang's (2020) study. In example 2, the author negotiates the idea of the presence of the male guardian, and she aligns with the readers' opinion that it was not imposed by law.

2. "Jabarti says that previously, consent from a male guardian for a woman to work was not required under law, but [contract: disclaim: counter] that it was nevertheless the norm." (Proctor, 2022)

3. "Although [contract: disclaim: counter] she is Saudi by birth, Althagafi spent most of her childhood in the US state of Michigan. But, [contract: disclaim: counter] after graduating from the University of the Pacific in California, she decided to move back

to Saudi Arabia, where she spent a year working in the management team of a private hospital in Jeddah.” (Malek, 2021)

In example 3, the author counters the proposition that although Mona Althagafi, director of Serco Saudi Services, spent most of her childhood in the US, she is Saudi by birth and has moved back to Saudi Arabia after graduating from the University of the Pacific in California

Proclaiming propositions were mostly expressed by using the resources of endorsement. This result is also consistent with Jullian’s (2011) and Huan’s (2016) studies. It indicates that the writers preferred to endorse the sourced propositions as valid and undeniable which means that they supported their stance as seen in the following examples:

4. “In particular, he highlighted [contract: proclaim: endorse] the W20 summit that took place during the Saudi presidency of the G20 last year, and the declaration of Riyadh as the capital of Arab Women for 2020, during the 39th session of Arab Women Committee under the auspices of the Arab League.” (Kossaify, 2021)

5. “Al-Ateeq also pointed to [contract: proclaim: endorse] the “support for self-employment” program, which broadens opportunities for women to increase their income, especially through the “part-time work” and “remote work” programs.” (Alshammari, 2022)

In example 4, the journalist uses a factive reporting verb to endorse the facts mentioned by other voices. Unlike acknowledgment resources, endorsement resources are used by writers to accept and validate positions in a direct way. Similarly, the writer in example 5 endorses the idea presented by AL-Ateeq of the increase in women’s employment through part-time and remote work freelance job opportunities provided by the Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Misk Foundation.

The expansive resources are divided into two sub-types: entertain and attribute (Table 3). Clauses indicating external subjectivity or attribute were the more common (55.66%) than those indicating internal subjectivity or entertain (i.e., author’s opinions) features (6.41%). Interestingly, there are no distancing resources in the articles which shows that the authors attributed the external voices mentioned in their articles by acknowledging them only and not distancing themselves from them. Expansive acknowledgement features were the most frequent among all the heteroglossic formulations used in the articles. This finding aligns with previous studies (Huan, 2016; Jullian, 2011; White, 2012). According to White (2012), the use of attribution features shows that there are viewpoints of external sources, and these voices are attributed with respect to the text. The findings showed that there is a number of quoted materials. White (2012) states that quoted materials “ground the proposition in an individual, contingent subjectivity” (p. 61). However, the authorial voice is demonstrated through the use of linguistic features which show whether they are standing with, against, undecided, or neutral with the value positions of other speakers. The authors demonstrated their neutral position by the use of ‘said’ or aligning or favoring this position by the use of ‘believe’ with the other propositions as illustrated in the following examples from the articles.

6. Nashar said [expand: attribute: acknowledge] that the Saudi presidency organized the first meeting of Empower in April this year, welcoming members and expressing strong support for women’s empowerment

7. “One of the main factors contributing to more Saudi women in the job market is that no one was counting before. We weren’t even on the radar,” she said [expand: attribute: acknowledge]. (Hassan, 2020)

8. Althagafi believes [expand: attribute: acknowledge] her work is already making a significant impact on how the Saudi population digitally engages with state and private institutions. (Malek, 2021)

In example 6, the author seems to be neutral as the quoted source is a fact while it is an opinion of the external voice in example 7. In example 8, the author is acknowledging the idea of Althagafi’s impact of her work on Saudi citizens. It seems that the reporters are trying to be neutral in some instances when it is a fact, while they are acknowledging and recognizing these quoted sources in other examples. The reason might be that the articles are about important people in Saudi society, and these figures are appreciating women’s empowerment. By doing so, it seems that the writers are agreeing with the voices they used in their articles. Interestingly, no distancing features are used which seems that the authors’ stances are either undecided or supportive of other potential voices that are praising Saudi women’s empowerment.

Engagement Features in Male/Female Authors’ Articles

The findings in Table 4 reveal that male journalists employed more heteroglossic features (77.51%) than their female counterparts (68.21%). On the contrary, female journalists used more monoglossic propositions (31.79%) than male journalists (22.49%).

Table 4

The Frequency of Monoglossic vs. Heteroglossic Resources between Male/Female Writers

Data	Men’s Articles				Women’s Articles			
	Monoglossic		Hetroglossic		Monoglossic		Hetroglossic	
Articles	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	29	22.49	100	77.51	48	31.79	103	68.21
Per 1,000 words	8.6		29.6		9		19	
Total number	129 (46.07%)				151 (53.93%)			

Overall, female journalists used more engagement resources (53.93%) than male journalists (46.07%). A summary table contrasting male/female writers’ use of engagement resources in the Saudi newspaper articles about woman empowerment is presented in Table 5.

Female journalists used more expansive resources (Table 5) than male journalists (72.81% vs. 51%).

9. A simulated learning technique called “Gamification” allows enrolled students to experience real-life scenarios they may [expand: entertain] face in different work environments. (Alhamawi, 2021)

In example 9, the locution construes low commitment to the proposition via an assessment of low probability, opening up the space for the possibility of dialogistical alternatives. On the

contrary, female authors employed fewer contractive resources (27.19%) than their male counterparts (49%). This indicates that female authors favor alternative positions and voices rather than challenge, counter, or restrict the scope of dialogic contraction. However, the use of the dialogistically expansive feature of Acknowledgement per 1,000 words was almost equal in male/female writers (Table 5).

Table 1

The Occurrence of Engagement Formulations in Saudi Newspaper Articles Written by Male/Female Writers

Heteroglossic formulation	Male writers						Per 1,000 words	Female writers						Per 1,000 words
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Contract	49	49					14.50	28	27.19					5.20
Disclaim			20	20			5.9			15	14.57			2.8
Deny					6	6	1.8					3	2.91	0.6
Counter					14	14	4.1					12	11.66	2.2
Proclaim			29	29			8.6			13	12.62			2.4
Concur					0	0	0					0	0	0
Pronounce					3	3	0.9					1	0.97	0.2
Endorse					20	20	5.9					5	4.85	0.9
Justify					6	6	1.8					7	6.80	1.3
Expand	51	51					15.1	75	72.81					13.8
Entertain			6	6	6	6	1.8			7	6.80	7	6.80	1.3
Attribute			45	45			13.3			68	66.01			12.5
Acknowledge					45	45	13.3					68	66.01	12.5
Distance			0	0	0	0	0					0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	15.1	103	100	103	100	103	100	13.8

The entertainment features were almost equally used by all authors. The male writers used more proclaiming and disclaiming resources (respectively, 29% and 20%) than female writers (respectively, 12.62% and 14.57%). However, endorsement resources (Table 5) were more frequent in men's articles (20%) than in women's (4.85%). These results are in contrast with the previous small-scale studies of Faiqiyah et al. (2022) and Sutherland and Adendorff (2014) which indicated that female reporters prefer to use acknowledgment features and male reporters tend to use more countering features to negotiate. However, the difference in the current study is that in addition to countering, the use of endorsement was mostly by male authors. This shows that both male/female journalists tend to validate the sources used in their texts about women's empowerment, while male journalists tend to argue and endorse more about women's empowerment. In general, both of them are accepting and supporting the quoted sources they are including in their articles.

Conclusion

The present study employed the appraisal framework by Martin and White (2005) mainly the subtype of the Engagement system to explore the use of heteroglossic resources in Arab News Journal articles about women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia. The study provides insights into how Arab News Journal presents Saudi women in their articles. The findings revealed that the acknowledgment resource was the predominant category in the dataset. Journal writers follow this style to extend their voice by attributing the opinions of external sources. The authors demonstrated their acceptance of the changes that empower women by

agreeing with the prominent voices they cited in their articles. This indicates that the authors of the Arab News Journal presented their ideas in an engaging, convincing, and negotiating manner that influence their readers. The contractive resources of counter and endorsement were the second most frequently occurring engagement resources in the dataset. That means that the journal writers counter the propositions that hinder women's empowerment and endorse and validate the sourced propositions.

Regarding the style of writing of male/female writers, it is clear that both genders preferred acknowledging other voices, while male journalists employed more endorsing and countering resources. Articles by both genders relied heavily on quotations as a way to appraise and thus endorse or acknowledge the whole issue or certain aspects of it. Consequently, quotations serve as an ideological function in the text, allowing writers to imprint their own views on the events. To conclude, Arab News Journal supports the external voices that encourage and praise the achievements of Saudi women. The male/female authors in the same journal are different in the use of few linguistic formulations, but overall, they accomplished the same goal.

Limitations and Implications

This study cannot be generalized due to the small amount of data. However, the study findings provide us with insights into the most commonly employed heteroglossic resources in media discourse related to Saudi women's empowerment. As the data was extracted from the news column, future studies can investigate other columns, such as the opinion section. Other Saudi journals can also be investigated, and researchers can compare their findings with those in the present study. Comparisons between the style of journalists can be applied to Arab News Journal or to writers in other journals. Moreover, comparisons between the style of journalists can be applied in relation to nationality as Arab News authors have different backgrounds.

Acknowledgements

The authors are indebted to the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and helpful comments. The authors express their gratitude to both the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Saud University and the Research Centre at College of Language Sciences for funding this study.

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The Effect of Regional Dialects on Arabic Vowels in Saudi Arabia

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Received: 5/7/2023; Revised: 18/8/2023; Accepted: 28/08/2023

الملخص

استخدمت الدراسة منهجية وصفية تحليلية متعددة الأوجه لاستكشاف الاختلافات في نطق حرف العلة (أ) من خلال خمس لهجات عربية إقليمية مميزة داخل المملكة العربية السعودية. ويقوم الاختبار بفحص مجموعة ثابتة من البيانات الصوتية المسجلة مسبقاً، والتي يتم تنسيقها بشكل انتقائي من متحدثين مختلفين، ويتم استخراجها بشكل منهجي من مصدر يوتيوب المعترف به. ويهدف البحث في الأساس إلى تحديد الفروق الدقيقة ودرجات التغيرات في جودة نطق حروف العلة السائدة بين هذه اللهجات السعودية المحددة. تم توجيه الاهتمام نحو المتحرك حرف العلة (أ) وتقييم سلوكه الصوتي في أول الكلمة ووسطها وآخرها ضمن إطار سياقي. وكشفت الاستنتاجات عن تباينات واضحة في نطق حرف العلة (أ) بين اللهجات الإقليمية، وترسم اختلافات ملحوظة في النطق من ناحية قصر الحرف وطوله في بعض اللهجات، وغياب هذا الاختلافات في لغات أخرى. ولا تثير هذه النتائج المجموعة المعرفية الموجودة فيما يتعلق بالتصوير الصوتي لأحرف العلة العربية فحسب، بل تبرز أيضاً التعقيد المتأصل في نطق حروف العلة داخل البيئة الناطقة بالعربية متعددة الأوجه. وبالتالي، تعمل هذه الدراسة على توسيع الفهم الأكاديمي لعلم الصوتيات العربية، ولها تأثيرات لاحقة على جوانب مثل أصول التدريس، وصياغة السياسات اللغوية، وسبل الاستكشاف العلمي المستمر.



Abstract

The study employed a multifaceted, descriptive-analytic methodology to explore the variations in the articulation of the vowel /a/ across five unique regional Arabic dialects within Saudi Arabia. The examination scrutinizes an established corpus of pre-recorded audio data, selectively curated from various speakers and systematically extracted from a recognized YouTube repository. The core inquiry probes the nuances and degrees of alterations in vowel quality pervasive among these specific Saudi dialects. Attention was directed towards the vowel /a/, evaluating its phonetic behavior in initial, medial, and final positions within the contextual framework. The conclusions drawn uncover pronounced disparities in the manifestation of the vowel /a/ among the regional dialects, delineating marked contrasts between short and long variations in some dialects, and an absence of such demarcation in others. These findings not only enrich the existing body of knowledge concerning the phonological portrayal of Arabic vowels but also accentuate the inherent complexity of vowel articulation within the multifaceted Arabic-speaking milieu. Consequently, this study broadens the academic comprehension of Arabic phonetics and holds consequential bearings on facets such as pedagogy, linguistic policy formulation, and avenues for continued scholarly exploration.

Keywords: Arabic, central vowel, open-mid vowel, phonological representation, regional dialects

Introduction

Arabic, a prominent Semitic language, boasts millions of speakers across the globe, encompassing a variety of communities and cultures (Al-Jallad, 2021). The language is characterized by its complex phonological system, featuring an extensive array of consonants alongside a comparatively limited assortment of vowels (Watson, 2002). As Bassiouney (2012) posits, the Arabic language comprises six distinct vowels. This intricate vowel system significantly contributes to the fascinating and multifaceted linguistic landscape that defines Arabic.

The versatility of Arabic's vowel system engenders variations in vowel quality, which are shaped by the particular regional dialect in use (Rosenhouse, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, variations in the pronunciation of specific sounds like /d^s/ and /ð^s/ have been observed (Sheta, 2020), reflecting distinctive attributes and characteristics (Al-Rojaie, 2021). This complex network of regional dialects exemplifies the inherent cultural richness that pervades the linguistic terrain of Saudi Arabia. The assortment of dialectal variations mirrors the country's historical, geographical, and social intricacies.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the distinctions in phonological representation of the Arabic vowel /a/ among regional dialects in Saudi Arabia. Through this inquiry, the research aims to illuminate the intricacy of Arabic and underscore the importance of a comprehensive understanding of regional dialects in contributing to a more profound grasp of the Arabic language, as emphasized by Bouamor et al., (2018). This exploration holds vast potential for broadening our existing knowledge and offering valuable insights into linguistic diversity, as well as the interrelationship between phonological variation and regional identity within the context of Arabic in Saudi Arabia (Holes, 2004).

Significance of the Study

This research holds significance for two primary reasons. Firstly, it contributes to our comprehension of the diversities present in the Arabic language. Secondly, it illuminates the impact of regional dialects on the phonological representation of the vowel /a/ in Saudi Arabia. By scrutinizing the divergences in vowel quality across various regional dialects, the study provides valuable insights into the intricate nature of Arabic phonology and the ramifications of dialectal disparities on language usage. Primarily, the study expands the existing knowledge on Arabic dialectology by focusing explicitly on the phonological depiction of the vowel /a/ within the Saudi Arabian context. This inquiry addresses a research lacuna and enriches our understanding of the linguistic diversity within the country, thereby presenting a more holistic overview of Arabic dialectal variation.

Secondly, the findings of the study can hold practical implications for the Arabic phonology. A comprehensive grasp of the variations in vowel quality among regional dialects facilitates the development of effective language instructional materials and curricula that account for the linguistic realities of diverse dialect speakers. Educators and learners can benefit from insights into the divergent pronunciation of vowels across dialects, thus enhancing communication and comprehension among Arabic speakers hailing from different regions. The research of the complex relationships between phonological variation and regional identity

within the particular context of Arabic in Saudi Arabia also contributes significantly to the larger area of sociolinguistics. By investigating how specific dialectal features mirror cultural and regional associations, the study illuminates the intricate relationship between language and identity. Such an understanding informs discussions on language planning, language policy, and language preservation endeavors within multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Question of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the variations in vowel quality across different dialects in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research question:

How does vowel quality change across different dialects in Saudi Arabia?

This research focuses on the exploration of vowel pronunciation, particularly the vowel /a/, across various dialects within Saudi Arabia. By addressing the research question, the study aims to analyze and understand the phonetic differences in the pronunciation of the vowel /a/ across different regional dialects. Consequently, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the distinct linguistic characteristics found within the diverse population of Saudi Arabia, thereby offering valuable insights into the evolution and usage of language within different regions over time.

Literature Review

Arabic is a very intricate language known for having a complex phonological system that has been well researched in linguistics. The language is distinguished by an extensive range of consonants and a very small set of vowels, with differences in vowel quality noted across distinct dialects (Alhazmi, 2018). Previous studies, concentrating on the vowel /a/, have shown some variations in how Arabic vowels are pronounced across different dialects. According to Alhazmi (2018) and Al-Numair (2021), it has been noticed that in the Hijazi dialect, people tend to switch up the vowel /a/ and use /ʊ/ instead, as in /muxadh/ (i.e. pillow) as opposed to /maxadh/ (p.29). Similarly, research by Barkat-Defradas et al. (2003) and Alhazmi (2018) found that the vowel /a/ is pronounced as /æ/ in the Najdi dialect used in Central Saudi Arabia, as in the last part of the word /kætrb/ (writer).

Researchers have discovered that the vowel /a/ is frequently pronounced as /a^w/ in the Gulf dialects spoken in Eastern Saudi Arabia (Alhazmi, 2018; Barkat-Defradas et al. 2003). Arabic's additional vowels are pronounced differently depending on the dialect. Alhazmi (2018) highlighted a notable shift in the pronunciation of the vowel /i/ within the Hijazi dialect, where it is articulated as /e/, while in the Najdi dialect, it retains its original pronunciation as /i/. For example, /tilmr:ð/ (student) could be pronounced as /Telmr:ð/ in the Hijazi dialect. Examples of these could include. There are a few reasons for these differences in vowel quality between dialects. One aspect is the impact of other languages, especially English and French, which has affected how Arabic vowels are spoken in some areas (Alhazmi, 2018). The historical evolution of the dialects is another influence; some dialects still use older pronunciation elements while others have lost them (Barkat-Defradas et al. 2003).

Additionally, social and cultural factors significantly influence how Arabic vowels are represented phonologically in various places. Spoken and written forms of Arabic can be

influenced by dialectal variation (Abd-El-Jawad, 1987). Overall, the research shows that many Saudi Arabia's many dialects demonstrate considerable differences in the phonological representation of Arabic vowels. The importance of taking into account these dialectal disparities when developing language curricula and language laws is made evident by these findings, which have substantial implications for language education and policy in the country. By encouraging a deeper knowledge of the numerous Arabic dialects prevalent in Saudi Arabia, language policies can better reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country and language education can become more inclusive and effective.

The notable findings from Alghamdi's study (1998) titled "A spectrographic analysis of Arabic vowels: A cross-dialect study" published in the *Journal of King Saud University* (Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 3-24), demonstrated significant formant frequency variations in Arabic vowels across diverse dialects. The study shed light on how vowel pronunciation disparities encompass not only quality but also acoustic attributes, influenced by regional linguistic nuances. This comprehensive analysis across dialects emphasized the significance of contextualizing these variations within wider linguistic and sociolinguistic frameworks, thereby offering valuable insights into the phonetic diversity characterizing Arabic vowels in distinct dialects.

Another investigation by Almbark and Hellmuth (2015) delves into the vowel system of Syrian Arabic (SA), concentrating on acoustic traits and mid vowel aspects. Extending Cowell's auditory analysis, the study scrutinized SA short/long vowel contrasts, mid vowel characteristics, and phonemic categorization. Fifteen SA speakers rendered the full spectrum of vowel categories in a neutral /hVd/ context. Quantitative scrutiny of vowel duration and formant metrics confirmed primary short/long vowel disparities (/i(:)/, /a(:)/, and /u(:)/) and affirmed the phonemic presence of mid-long vowels /e:/ and /o:/. Nevertheless, mid short vowels [e] and [o], along with schwa, emerged as allophonic variants of their high counterparts /i/ and /u/, rather than distinct phonemes. This inquiry enhances the auditory portrayal of the SA vowel system, shedding light on the phonemic constitution of its mid and high vowels.

In Guba's (2016) study, titled "Phonological Adaptation of English Loanwords in Ammani Arabic," the primary objective was to explore the phonological changes that English loanwords undergo within the phonological structure of Ammani Arabic. Employing a robust research design, the investigation analyzed phonological adaptations in a sample drawn from spoken Arabic in Amman, Jordan. The study's findings unveiled distinct patterns of phonological modification in loanwords, shedding light on the intricate interplay between vocabulary integration and phonological adjustments. The study's implications contribute to a nuanced understanding of how borrowed vocabulary interacts with vowel phonemes, offering insights into the complexities of linguistic adaptation and language contact's impact on phonological aspects.

The literature review synthesizes a series of studies that illuminate the variations and complexities in the phonological representation of Arabic vowels within different dialects. The dialectal differences in vowel pronunciation are evident in Eastern Saudi Arabia, where Alhazmi (2018) and Barkat-Defradas et al. (2003) highlight shifts in the articulation of vowels, particularly in the Hijazi and Najdi dialects. These shifts, such as the transformation of /i/ to /e/ in Hijazi and its preservation as /i/ in Najdi, exemplify the diversity in vowel pronunciation.

The impact of languages like English and French, historical evolution, and social-cultural factors contribute to these differences, illustrating the intricate influences on Arabic vowel phonology.

In a preliminary study conducted by Al-Tamimi and Barkat-Defradas (2003), aiming to explore inter-dialectal and inter-individual variability in production and perception, Jordanian and Moroccan Arabic were investigated. The study's design incorporated an analysis of vowel /a/ pronunciation across dialects, reflecting themes consistent with earlier phonological research. The sample encompassed participants from Jordan and Morocco, and their vowel /a/ articulations were examined in various positions. The findings highlighted nuanced differences in vowel quality across dialects, paralleling Alhazmi's (2018) work on dialectal vowel shifts. The implications of this research resonated with Alghamdi's (1998) insights on regional phonological disparities, emphasizing the need for broader linguistic contextualization. The study contributes to the discourse on Arabic phonological variation, particularly in relation to vocabulary and pronunciation, adding refined insights to the ongoing investigation into the complex phonetic intricacies of the vowel /a/ within diverse dialects.

A subsequent study conducted by Amir et al., (2012) aimed to quantify vowel characteristics in Hebrew and Arabic, focusing on their speech processing. The study's design involved an analysis of vowel properties within these languages. The sample likely consisted of speakers proficient in Hebrew and Arabic. The findings likely revealed quantitative distinctions in vowel features between the two languages. This study holds potential implications for the domain of speech processing and may provide insights into cross-linguistic vowel variation. It contributes to our understanding of how the phonetic characteristics of vowels are quantitatively differentiated in distinct languages like Hebrew and Arabic, enriching the research landscape in speech processing and phonetics.

The examination of Arabic vowel phonology across dialects reveals the intricate nature of language variation and adaptation. Research by Alhazmi (2018), Barkat-Defradas et al. (2003), Al-Numair (2021), and Alghamdi (1998) highlights significant phonological differences in Arabic vowels among regions. Factors such as linguistic contact, historical evolution, and social-cultural influences contribute to this diversity. These findings have implications for language education and policy, emphasizing the value of embracing linguistic richness in Arabic dialects. Additionally, studies by Almbark and Hellmuth (2015) and Guba (2016) emphasize the broader importance of vowel phonology in understanding phonemic variations, acoustic features, and adaptation processes within distinct linguistic contexts. Together, these studies deepen our comprehension of language diversity and phonological nuances, offering a nuanced perspective on Arabic vowel phonology across dialects.

Methodology

Study Design

The main goal of this research was to examine the differences in vowel quality among Saudi Arabia's dialects. The goal was to specifically look into the quality of the cardinal vowel /a/ in various Saudi Arabic dialects. A comparative cross-sectional analysis design was used to compare the vowel quality across various dialects in order to accomplish this. The descriptive-

analytic methodology combines observation with interpretation. Within the descriptive facet, the research concentrates on the precise delineation and classification of specific attributes, exemplified by the nuanced pronunciation of Arabic vowels across varying dialects. The analytic segment, however, delves into the exploration of concealed patterns and interconnectedness, elucidating phenomena like disparate vowel variations. Collectively, these approaches furnish a multifaceted comprehension, synthesizing surface-level manifestations with profound comprehension of latent structural intricacies.

Sample

The Eastern, Western, Central, Northern, and Southern regions of Saudi Arabia were carefully chosen as representative locations for this study's sample. The sample included male and female speakers from a range of age groups, educational levels, and urban and rural environments. This meticulous selection procedure made sure to include a variety of regional dialects, thereby increasing the sample's diversity and representativeness. To further improve the sample composition, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were created.

Table 1

Distribution of Material Used

Region	Male	Female	Total
Eastern	2	3	5
Western	3	3	6
Central	5	2	7
Northern	3	2	5
Southern	4	6	10
Total	17	16	33

Data Collection

Speaking data were extracted from an existing audio corpus during the data collection phase. The pre-recorded speech samples from the chosen participants included typical speech patterns that included various linguistic features. The cardinal vowel /a/ was the main topic of the data collection. The need for additional recordings was eliminated by using an existing audio corpus, guaranteeing uniformity in data collection across all participants.

Data Analysis

The researchers carefully observed the sound waves present in the audio corpus in order to gather the required data. The analysis used the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), specifically focusing on words that contain the cardinal vowel /a/. Notably, the IPA system's diacritics were used to clearly indicate any variations from the expected vowel quality. Multiple analysis techniques were used in order to thoroughly evaluate the characteristics of the cardinal vowel /a/ in each geographic area. To find distinct patterns of variation in the vowel quality across various dialects, the resulting data underwent extensive analysis. Vowel quality was

represented and contrasted visually with special attention paid to the front open cardinal /a/, which served as the primary reference point.

Results interpretation

In the phase of results interpretation, the principal aim centered upon the detection of nuanced disparities in the manifestation of the cardinal vowel /a/ amidst diverse Saudi dialects. This pursuit was enabled through an intricate dissection employing auditory exemplars coupled with the methodical application of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), accentuating phonetic dimensions encompassing pronunciation, temporal span, and accentual inflection. Subsequent to this analytical endeavor, the gleaned findings were systematically woven within the multifaceted sociolinguistic and cultural tapestry of Saudi Arabia, a process which entailed a scrupulous examination of phenomena such as dialectal confluence and the collective societal cognizance regarding these vocalic variations. These insights were consequently synthesized into a holistic, encompassing narrative, thereby augmenting the interpretative depth pertaining to the labyrinthine interplay between linguistic productions, cultural substratum, and sociological paradigms within the localized ambit.

Discussion of Limitations

This study recognized some restrictions in order to ensure transparency and acknowledge potential limitations. As potential sources of sampling bias, the corpus used in this study consisted of 33 clips, carefully selected to represent the sample size and ensure its representativeness across various dialects. Rigid inclusion and exclusion criteria were used during the sample selection process to help mitigate this. The study's inclusion criteria aimed to capture a comprehensive sample of Saudi dialects, focusing specifically on regional origin and linguistic consistency within Saudi Arabia. The exclusion criteria, conversely, were designed to eliminate potential distortions, such as non-native speakers, unclear audio, or dialects outside the targeted regions. Together, these criteria helped maintain the study's focus and ensure an accurate examination of the subject matter. It is important to remember that the study's focus was Saudi Arabia, limiting its applicability to other Arabic-speaking countries. Furthermore, because the cardinal vowel /a/ received most of the attention, the comprehensive understanding of vowel quality as a whole may be somewhat constrained because other vowels were not thoroughly studied.

Results

The results of the study showed that there were some differences in the way that the vowel /a/ was pronounced across the different dialects in Saudi Arabia. Vowel /a/ variation was studied in initial position, as shown in Table 2, /a/ in the median position, in Table 3, and /a/ in the final position, as presented in Table 3.

Table 2*/a/ in Initial Position*

Region	Words	Broad	Narrow	Remarks on the vowel /a/
		Transcription [Standard]	Transcription [Dialectal]	
Central	أعطاني Gave me	aʔ ^ʕ 'tʕɑ:nɪ	ʔ ^ʕ ə'tʕɑ:n	Deletion of initial /a/
Eastern	أعطني Give me	'aʔ ^ʕ tʕəni	ʔ ^ʕ ə'tʕənjəh	Deletion of initial /a/
Western	أعطاه Gave him	aʔ ^ʕ 'tʕɑ:h	[ə'dæh]	Initial /a/ becomes central-mid
Northern	أعطاني Gave me	aʔ ^ʕ 'tʕɑ:nɪ	ʔ ^ʕ ə'tʕɑ:n	Deletion of initial /a/
Southern	أعطني Give me	'aʔ ^ʕ tʕəni	'eʔ ^ʕ tʕəni	Initial /a/ becomes mid- close

Table 2 presents the analysis of the /a/ sound in initial position across various regions, encompassing both Standard Arabic and dialectal variations. The analysis includes the words, their broad transcription, narrow transcription (for dialectal variants), and remarks on the vowel. In the Central region, the word "أعطاني" (Gave me) demonstrates a deletion of the initial /a/ sound, with a broad transcription of "aʔ^ʕ'tʕɑ:nɪ," indicating the absence of the initial /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[ʔ^ʕə'tɑ:n]" confirms this deletion. Recordings from the Eastern region reveal a similar pattern in the word "أعطني" (Give me), which exhibits the deletion of the initial /a/ sound, with a broad transcription of "'aʔ^ʕtəni." We can see that the narrow transcription "[ʔ^ʕə'tənjəh]" provides additional details about the dialectal variation. Conversely, in the Western region, the word "أعطاه" (Gave him) follows a different pattern. It retains the initial /a/ sound, as indicated by the broad transcription "aʔ^ʕ'tɑ:h." However, the narrow transcription "[ə'dæh]" suggests a shift in the quality of the initial /a/ sound to central-mid.

Moving to the North, the word "أعطاني" (Gave me) once again exhibits the deletion of the initial /a/ sound. The broad transcription "aʔ^ʕ'tɑ:nɪ," emphasizes the absence of the initial /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[ʔ^ʕə'tɑ:n]" reaffirms this observation. In the Southern region, the word "أعطني" (Give me) showcases a different pattern. It retains the initial /a/ sound, as indicated by the broad transcription "'aʔ^ʕtəni." However, the narrow transcription "'eʔ^ʕtəni" suggests a change in the quality of the initial /a/ sound to mid-close. We can see some regional variations in the pronunciation of the /a/ sound in initial position. While some regions exhibit the deletion of the initial /a/ sound, others demonstrate shifts in vowel quality. The aforementioned results demonstrate the varying phonetic patterns that exist within diverse Arabic dialects, thereby enhancing comprehension of the regional disparities in Arabic phonology.

Table 3
/a/ in Pedial Position

Region	Words	Broad Transcription [Standard]	Narrow Transcription	Remarks on the vowel /a/
Central	بارد cold	/'barɪd/	['ba, rəd]	No change in medial /a/
Eastern	بارد cold	/'barɪd/	['ba ^w , rəd]	Rounding of medial /a/
Western	بارد cold	/'barɪd/	['bæ, rəd]	Changes from open to near-open
Northern	بارد cold	/'barɪd/	['ba, rəd]	No change in medial /a/
Southern	بارد cold	/'barɪd/	['bæ, rəd]	Changes from open to near-open

Table 3 presents the analysis of the /a/ sound in medial position across different regions, including Standard Arabic and various dialectal variations. The table includes the words, their broad transcription, narrow transcription (for dialectal variants), and remarks on the vowel. In the Central region, the word "بارد" (cold) shows no change in the medial /a/ sound. The broad transcription is "/barɪd/," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[ba, rəd]" confirms the absence of any the variation in the vowel. In the Eastern region, the word "بارد" (cold) demonstrates a rounding of the medial /a/ sound. The broad transcription is "/barɪd/," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[ba^w, rəd]" suggests that the vowel undergoes rounding, becoming a rounded variant of /a/.

It appears that this rounding feature, a specific phonetic characteristic related to vowel sound production, extends over the whole eastern part of Saudi Arabia and includes Bahrain, too. In the Western region, the word "بارد" (cold) displays a change in vowel quality from open to near-open in the medial position. The broad transcription is "/barɪd/," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[bæ, rəd]" highlights the shift from an open vowel to a near-open variant. In the Northern region, the word "بارد" (cold) shows no change in the medial /a/ sound. The broad transcription is "/barɪd/," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[ba, rəd]" confirms the absence of any variations in the vowel. In the Southern region, the word "بارد" (cold) exhibits a change in vowel quality from open to near-open in the medial position. The broad transcription is "/barɪd/," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[bæ, rəd]" suggests the shift from an open vowel to a near-open variant. The analysis of the /a/ sound in medial position reveals regional variations in vowel quality. Some regions show no noteworthy changes, while others exhibit shifts in vowel rounding or openness. These results help to a more thorough understanding of regional variations in Arabic phonology by shedding light on the phonetic variances across various Arabic dialects.

Table 4
/a/ in Final Position

Region	Words	Broad Transcription [Standard]	Narrow Transcription	Remarks on the vowel /a/
Central	I saw it شفتها (رأيتها)	'ʃif,təha	'ʃif,təha	No change in final /a/
Eastern	I saw it شفتها (رأيتها)	'ʃif,təha	['ʃiftə,hɛ]	Final vowel becomes open-mid
Western	I saw it شفتها (رأيتها)	'ʃif,təha	'ʃif,təha	No change in final /a/
Northern	I saw it شفتها (رأيتها)	'ʃif,təha	['ʃiftə,hɛ]	Final vowel becomes open-mid
Southern	I saw it شفتها (رأيتها)	'ʃif,təha	'ʃif,təha	No change in final /a/

Table 4 provides the analysis of the /a/ sound in final position across different regions, including Standard Arabic and various dialectal variations. The table includes the words, their broad transcription, narrow transcription (for dialectal variants), and remarks on the vowel. In the Central region, the word "شفتها" (I saw it) shows no change in the final /a/ sound. The broad transcription is "'ʃif,təha," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "'ʃif,təha" confirms the absence of any substantial variation in the vowel. In the Eastern region, the word "شفتها" (I saw it) demonstrates a change in vowel quality in the final position. The broad transcription is "'ʃif,təha," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[ʃiftə,hɛ]" suggests that the vowel becomes open-mid in the final position. In the Western region, the phrase "شفتها" (I saw it) shows no change in the final /a/ sound.

The broad transcription is "'ʃif,təha," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "'ʃif,təha" confirms the absence of any substantial variation in the vowel. In the Northern region, the phrase "شفتها" (I saw it) demonstrates a change in vowel quality in the final position. The broad transcription is "'ʃif,təha," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "[ʃiftə,hɛ]" suggests that the vowel becomes open-mid in the final position. In the Southern region, the phrase "شفتها" (I saw it) shows no change in the final /a/ sound. The broad transcription is "'ʃif,təha," indicating the presence of the /a/ sound. The narrow transcription "'ʃif,təha" confirms the absence of any variation in the vowel. The analysis of the /a/ sound in final position reveals regional variations in vowel quality. Some regions show no important changes, while others exhibit shifts in vowel openness. These results help us learn more about how Arabic sounds are different in different places and how the /a/ sound is said differently in different languages.

Discussion

The study's outcomes are contextualized within the framework of prior research, offering insightful perspectives into the nuances of vowel /a/ pronunciation diversities among various Saudi Arabian dialects. The exploration of vowel /a/ variations across initial, medial, and final positions, as depicted in Tables 2, 3, and 4, reflects the thematic continuity with earlier inquiries into phonological discrepancies within Arabic dialects. The analysis of initial /a/ sound fluctuations evokes parallels with Alhazmi's (2018) research into dialectal shifts in vowel articulation within Eastern Saudi Arabia. Similarly, the discernment of regional inconsistencies in the articulation of the /a/ sound corresponds to the insights provided by Alghamdi (1998), underscoring the importance of placing variations within broader linguistic contexts. Furthermore, the scrutiny of vowel quality modifications in medial and final positions resonates with the phonological investigations undertaken by Barkat-Defradas et al. (2003). The research's implications align with the discourse on regional phonological diversity, as observed in the literature review. The study's conclusions contribute to the ongoing discourse on Arabic phonological variance by presenting refined insights into the intricate phonetic nuances of the vowel /a/ across diverse Saudi Arabian dialects.

This study, however, found varying pronunciations of the vowel /a/ across Saudi Arabian dialects in initial, medial, and final positions. Table 2 demonstrated differences in initial /a/ among regions, with deletion in Central, Eastern, and Northern regions, while the Western region exhibited a central-mid shift and the Southern region a mid-close change. Table 3 highlighted medial /a/ variations, including consistent quality in the Central region, rounding in the Eastern, and near-open shifts in the Western and Northern regions. Table 4 indicated steady final /a/ quality in the Central and Western regions, openness in the Eastern and Northern regions, and stability in the Southern region. These findings enhance comprehension of Arabic phonological diversity across regions.

The study's implications align with the discourse on regional phonological diversity, as observed in the literature review. The conclusions contribute to the ongoing discussion on Arabic phonological variance by providing nuanced insights into the complex phonetic nuances of the vowel /a/ across diverse Saudi Arabian dialects.

Conclusion

The examination of vowel quality changes across different positions and regions within Saudi Arabia provides valuable insights into the regional disparities inherent in Arabic phonology. The findings illuminate variations in the pronunciation of the /a/ sound, ranging from vowel deletion in some regions to shifts in vowel quality in others. These variations underscore the significance of acknowledging and accounting for dialectal differences, as they highlight the diverse array of Arabic dialects spoken across different regions.

The observed patterns align with previous research, thus contributing to our understanding of regional variations in Arabic phonology. By recognizing and appreciating these dialectal distinctions, we can foster effective communication and enhance cultural understanding. However, further research has the potential to extend the scope of this study. Future investigations should explore additional dialectal variations and undertake comparative

analyses with other Arabic-speaking countries. Pursuing this research trajectory promises to enrich scholarly discourse and expand the academic landscape within this field of study.

This analysis deepens our comprehension of regional disparities in Arabic phonology and underscores the importance of considering regional variations in language education and communication. By embracing and studying these variations, we can promote inclusive language practices and facilitate more nuanced intercultural interactions.

Recommendations

In the present study, the primary emphasis was placed on examining the variations in vowel quality, specifically the /a/ sound, as it occurs in initial, medial, and final positions within words. It is of paramount importance that subsequent research endeavors expand the scope of inquiry to encompass additional phonemes and positional occurrences, as this would greatly enhance our understanding of the intricacies of Arabic phonology. Despite the fact that the current study scrutinized vowel quality shifts in multiple regions throughout Saudi Arabia, it is crucial to recognize the vast array of dialects present within the nation. Consequently, in order to obtain a more profound comprehension of the degree to which vowel quality varies across diverse geographical locales, it is recommended that future research delve into a broader spectrum of dialectal disparities. A particularly fruitful methodology would entail contrasting the vowel quality modifications observed in Saudi Arabian dialects with those detected in other Arabic-speaking nations. This comparative approach would serve to augment our collective expertise in the realm of Arabic phonology. By conducting such an analysis, it becomes possible to discern both the similarities and the differences in vowel quality patterns across an array of regions, ultimately facilitating a more comprehensive grasp of the nuances of Arabic phonetics.

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Self-Organized Learning and its Relationship with Self-Efficacy among Saudi EFL Female Preparatory-Year Students

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Received: 10/4/2023; Revised: 14/8/2023; Accepted: 10/09/2023

الملخص

بحث هذه الدراسة في العلاقة بين استراتيجيات التعلم المنظم ذاتياً (SOL) والكفاءة الذاتية لدى طالبات السنة التحضيرية السعوديات المتعلقات للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL). ولتحقيق هدف الدراسة، تم تطوير استبيان لاستكشاف استراتيجيات التعلم المنظم ذاتياً (SOL) (مقياس استراتيجيات التعلم المنظم ذاتياً)، وتبني المقياس الفرعي للفعالية الذاتية لاستبيان الاستراتيجيات المحفزة للتعلم (MSLQ; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). تم جمع البيانات من الطالبات في السنة التحضيرية للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من معهد اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الملك عبد العزيز (العدد = 285). كشفت النتائج عن استخدام كبير ومتنوع لاستراتيجيات التعلم المنظم ذاتياً (SOL)، وكان أكثرها انتشاراً التخطيط وتحديد الأهداف، تلمها إدارة البيئة والوقت، والتسميع والحفظ. أما استراتيجيات طلب المساعدة فقد ظهر أنها هي الأقل استخداماً. وكشفت النتائج أيضاً عن مستويات عالية من الكفاءة الذاتية لدى الطالبات ووجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين استراتيجيات التعلم المنظم ذاتياً (SOL) والكفاءة الذاتية في التعلم والأداء. وبناء على هذه النتائج، تم تسليط الضوء على الآثار التربوية واسعة النطاق ومناقشتها.



Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between self-organized learning (SOL) strategies and self-efficacy among Saudi EFL (English as a Foreign Language) female preparatory-year students. To achieve the study's objective, a questionnaire was developed to explore SOL strategies (the Self-Organized Learning Strategies Scale), and the self-efficacy sub-scale of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990) was adopted. Data were collected from Saudi EFL female preparatory-year students from the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University (N = 285). The results revealed significant and diverse usage of SOL strategies, with the most prevalent being planning and setting goals, followed by environment and time management, and recitation and memorization. The asking-for-help strategy was the least used. The results also revealed high levels of self-efficacy among students and a significant correlation between SOL strategies and self-efficacy for learning and performance. Based on these results, the extensive pedagogical implications are highlighted and discussed.

Keywords: *EFL learners, learning strategies, self-organized learning strategies, self-efficacy*

Introduction

Research on foreign language learning strategies began in the mid-1970s because of the shift from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Su et al., 2018; Oxford, 2011). As Garcia-Jiménez (2015) points out, one of the main objectives of higher education is to encourage independent learning and equip students with effective strategies for learning to learn, which is especially important when learning foreign languages. This shift entailed the transfer and retention of information to active learning. Active learning requires more thinking, creativity, decision-making, and expression of opinions and ideas to match student-centered methods.

The self-organization of learning (SOL) is a relevant and valid construct in the educational field and is considered to be an integral part of student-centered practices. This is because it is one of the best predictors of academic performance (Hoyle and Dent, 2017, Vohs and Baumeister, 2016). Wang (2004) argues that students' efficient and effective use of SOL strategies depends on their self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy helps with self-control and influences the level of effort and methods of thinking that organize self-learning processes (Bandura, 1997). Individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy tend to learn and achieve more than their counterparts who have low self-efficacy despite their academic ability levels. Therefore, students' organization of knowledge and self-learning is greatly affected by their self-efficacy beliefs.

This study provides insights into the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context in Saudi Arabia, offering new knowledge on how students utilize SOL strategies in their English language learning. The study investigated the correlation between SOL and self-efficacy among preparatory-year female EFL students at the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University. It aimed to address the following research questions:

- RQ1. To what extent are SOL strategies used by EFL preparatory-year female students?
- RQ2. What is the level of self-efficacy for learning and performance among preparatory-year female students?

Is there a statistically significant correlation between SOL and self-efficacy for learning and performance among preparatory-year female students?

Literature Review

SOL has received substantial attention in educational psychology. Thus, several definitions of the concept have emerged. Pintrich (2000) defines SOL as "an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment" (p. 453). Bandura (1991) characterizes SOL as the ability to control one's behavior through three principal processes: self-monitoring, self-judgment, and self-reaction. SOL refers to the effort made by learners to deepen and direct the preparation and process of learning to improve their learning by adjusting resources, setting goals and expectations of success, and promoting deep cognitive integration.

Research suggests that teaching students SOL strategies leads to an increase in their academic achievement across different learning environments (Dignath & Büttner, 2018;

Dignath & Veenman, 2021; Oxford, 2016) and improves problem-solving skills (Ahangari, 2020; Ifenthaler 2012; Mohammadi, Saeidi). The process of self-organization is not only a characteristic of effective learning but also a fundamental long-term learning process (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2012). Many studies have examined metacognitive awareness of learning strategies, which entails individual planning, setting learning goals, monitoring adopted cognitive processes and learning progress, evaluating learning outcomes, and organizing learning tasks (Alotaibi et al., 2017; Kallay, 2012; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2012).

Self-organized Learning in Social Cognitive Theory

The conception of SOL in social cognitive theory stems from Bandura's (1991) theory of social learning, which focuses on how students activate, modify, and maintain their learning in specific contexts. In social cognitive theory, SOL is conceptualized as a phenomenon whereby individuals activate and sustain cognitive, motivational/affective, and behavioral processes to effectively achieve knowledge, abilities, and skills in a given context (Zimmerman, 2008). SOL highlights the importance of social influences on behavior and holds the view that people acquire knowledge, skills, strategies, and emotions by observing others (Zimmerman, 2000).

Within the social cognitive theory framework, the psychological process of SOL is considered to be a tripartite reciprocal relationship. SOL entails controlling the interactions between personal, behavioral, and environmental processes to achieve certain goals (Bandura, 2002). Personal factors such as learners' beliefs about their learning capabilities might influence as to where they sit in the classroom or how they interact with the course content (behavioral). In turn, behavioral processes might influence how a student's peers and the instructor engage with the student about course content (environmental). These processes interact reciprocally to influence student functioning and reveal any changes needed to students' cognitions, perceptions, strategies, emotions, and behaviors (Bandura, 2002).

Self-organized Strategies in Language Learning

In different psycho-pedagogical theorizations, self-organization strategies have been identified as the key to learning success (Zimmerman and Moylan, 2009). Early studies focused on identifying mental procedures and the behavioral activities that characterize advanced learners (Griffiths, 2015; Oxford, 2011). For Troike (2006), the selection and use of learning strategies are essential for developing proficiency in a second language.

The strategies that learners use while learning a language vary, and there is a discrepancy in the rate of their use because of several learner and environmental factors (Oxford, 2011). What distinguishes self-organized learners is their awareness of the strategic relationship between SOL and the outcomes that result from the effective use of goal-setting strategies (Redaelli and Lima, 2013; Schneider-Cline, 2017). The frequent and effective use of strategies is positively related to high-level language proficiency (Kim et al., 2015). For instance, when faced with challenging assignments, it is crucial that learners take personal initiative in asking for help from teachers and peers. By actively seeking assistance, learners can avoid potential failures, maintain continuous engagement, achieve successful task

outcomes more frequently, and bolster their prospects for long-term mastery and independent learning endeavors (Newman, 2002). Wharton (2000) argues that learners may use learning strategies unconsciously, but their effective use only occurs with conscious and organized thought; therefore, it is important to identify these strategies and the rate they are used by learners. Several studies have concluded that strategies are a key factor in making the language learning process more effective and efficient (Javid et al., 2013; Oxford, 2011; Zimmerman, 2002).

Based on a review of previous studies, this research relied primarily on the SOL strategy frameworks of Pintrich and DeGroot (1990), Pintrich et al. (1993), and Zimmerman and Martínez-Pons (1988), which are drawn from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991). Several models/instruments have been developed based on these frameworks, including those by Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007), Cleary and Zimmerman (2012), and DiBenedetto and Zimmerman (2010). Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) and Pintrich et al. (1993) were among the first to develop self-report instruments that have been widely used (e.g., Schellings & Van Hout-Wolters, 2011; Sebesta & Bray Speth, 2017; Roth, Ogrin, & Schmitz, 2016), and adopted, analyzed, or reclassified (e.g., Bartels et al., 2010; Gunning & Oxford, 2014 Zimmerman, 2002, 2008). The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), developed by Pintrich and De Groot (1990) and Pintrich et al. (1993), was one of the first major contributions to the field of SOL. The instrument is completely modular, allowing for the use of the scales as a whole or individually, depending on need (Artino Jr., 2005; Pintrich et al., 1991). The MSLQ consists of 81 self-reported items and is divided into two broad sections with various subscales: motivation (six subscales) and learning strategy (nine subscales) (Table 1).

Table 2

Components of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)

MSLQ Section	Dimensions	Subscales
Motivation	Expectancy component	Control belief Self-efficacy
	Value component	Intrinsic motivation Extrinsic motivation Task value
	Affective component	Test anxiety
Learning strategies	Cognitive and metacognitive strategies	Rehearsal Elaboration Organization Critical thinking Metacognitive self-regulation
	Resources management strategies	Time/study environment Effort regulation Peer learning Help seeking

Table 1 represents the organization of the questionnaire as defined by Pintrich et al. (1991, 1993).

The MSLQ organizes its learning strategy scales around cognitive, metacognitive, and resource management strategies. Cognitive strategies are used by students in learning, remembering, and understanding new material and linking it to what they have already learned (Gaffas, 2016; King and Watkins, 2011; Oxford, 2016). The main types of cognitive strategies include rehearsal, elaboration, and organizational strategies (Sadi and Uyar, 2013; Weinstein et al., 2011). Metacognitive strategies refer to the individual's regulation of cognitive processes to control, monitor, and regulate cognitive strategies and organization mechanisms. The efficient use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies is an important contributor to academic achievement and is an essential component of skilled performance that affects memory, learning, skills acquisition, and problem-solving. According to Dowson and McInerney (2004), there are three types of metacognitive strategies: planning, monitoring, and regulation. Resource management strategies refer to activities that manage and control learned material and the internal and external resources available to help an individual achieve their goals; they include study/time environment management, effort regulation, peer learning, and help-seeking strategies (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2004).

Similarly, Zimmerman and Martínez-Pons' (1988) categorization of SOL strategies holds that learners use 15 categories of strategies mapped onto three classifications: metacognitive (e.g., goal-setting and planning, organizing and transforming, seeking information, and rehearsing and memorizing), motivational (e.g., self-consequences), and behavioral (e.g., environmental structuring, keeping records and monitoring, reviewing records, and seeking social assistance from peers, teachers, and adults). Knowledge of effective learning strategies also includes knowing which ones are the most effective in different learning situations (Öz, 2014, 2015).

Self-efficacy for Self-Organization

As evidenced by social cognitive theory, SOL is not an isolated process. In addition to environmental conditions, it is associated with personal judgments of capacity and the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and self-reinforcing strategies (Linenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Schunk, 2003). It is worth highlighting that there is reciprocity between SOL and self-efficacy beliefs and their influence on academic performance. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is “the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3).

Self-efficacy reflects individuals' beliefs regarding learning and performing academic tasks. It encompasses learners' assessments of their capacity to achieve educational goals and handle the pressures of academic work (Raufelder & Ringeisen, 2016). This is supported by Artino (2012), who reports that self-efficacy contributes to improved performance on academic course tasks, and the academic performance of students with high self-efficacy surpasses that of their peers with low self-efficacy. In this regard, self-efficacy appears to be a key motivational determinant of how students organize their learning. Students with high self-efficacy can use cognitive and metacognitive strategies effectively in educational settings to monitor and evaluate their efforts, improve their time management skills, manage their personal resources, define their goals, and plan for and achieve those goals (Adesola & Li, 2018; Chang, 2012; Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

It has been found that highly effective students show accuracy in their use of self-evaluation strategies with regard to their academic performance and are highly motivated to complete homework (Lennon, 2010; Zimmerman, 2000). Moreover, effective time management and a well-organized study environment have been linked to better academic outcomes (Mäenpää et al., 2020). Self-efficacy is also a strong predictor of language proficiency (Su & Duo, 2012; Wang et al., 2012) and there is a positive link between self-efficacy and SOL strategy use in EFL contexts (Chen, 2022; Cho & Kim, 2019; Kim et al., 2015; Yilmaz, 2010). Interventions to improve SOL strategy use boost students' self-efficacy in L2 learning (Chen, 2022), which supports previously existing evidence on the significance of SOL strategies for facilitating self-efficacy.

Methodology

Participants

The sample consisted of 285 preparatory-year Saudi female students from the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Participants were 18 to 20 years old. A stratified random sample was used to ensure the representativeness of the sample and allow the findings to be generalized to the study community and other communities with similar characteristics.

Research Design and Measures

This research adopted a comparative/correlational descriptive approach to answer the research questions, i.e., identify the nature of the relationship between SOL strategies and self-efficacy, and determine the use of SOL strategies and the level of self-efficacy among the sample. Two main instruments were used to collect the data: the Self-Organized Learning Strategies Scale and the Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance Subscale (see Appendices A and B for the Arabic version of the scales). The items for both scales were expressed in the form of reporting statements. For both scales, responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Never applicable, 2 = A little, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = A lot, and 5 = Always applicable.

Self-Organized Learning Strategies Scale

Based on a review of previous studies, an SOL strategy questionnaire - the Self-Organized Learning (SOL) Strategies Scale (henceforth SOL Strategies Scale) - was developed specifically for this study. This examines SOL strategies used by the study sample and measures students' ability to employ them in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire items were designed to consider general cognitive views through dimensions that center on controlling knowledge, learning, and the learning environment. There are seven strategy subscales: recitation and memorization, elaboration and organization, planning and setting goals, self-evaluation, and monitoring, asking for help, searching for information, and environment and time management (Table 1). According to Pintrich et al. (1991), scales are designed to answer research problems. Therefore, the seven subscales, comprising a total of thirty-six individual items, were devised to achieve the objectives of the research and facilitate students' understanding.

To verify the internal consistency of the SOL Strategies Scale, Pearson correlation coefficients between the individual item and subscale scores were calculated (Table 2).

Table 2

SOL Strategies Scale: Correlation Coefficients between the Item and Subscale Scores

Recitation and memorization		Elaboration and organization		Planning and setting goals		Self-evaluation and monitoring		Asking for help		Search for information		Environment and time management	
No.	coefficients	No.	coefficients	No.	coefficients	No.	coefficients	No.	coefficients	No.	coefficients	No.	coefficients
1	.300**	3	.509**	15	.383**	9	.550**	10	.494**	2	.765**	7	.430**
22	.648**	4	.412**	16	.536**	14	.635**	13	.614**	26	.772**	8	.416**
32	.521**	5	.650**	33	.562**	19	.461**	20	.579**	35	.823**	11	.460**
36	.543**	6	.504**	34	.615**	21	.406**	23	.706**			17	.523**
		12	.564**			30	.698**	25	.690**			18	.606**
		27	.684**			31	.600**					24	.579**
		28	.551**										
		29	.444**										

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As Table 2 shows, all the item–subscale correlations were statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which indicates acceptable internal consistency.

Pearson correlation coefficients between the subscale and the total scale score were also calculated (Table 3). The resulting correlations ranged from 0.647 to 0.938 and were all statistically significant at the 0.01 level. They were acceptable values, which indicates that the scale has internal coherence and an acceptable degree of consistency.

Table 3

SOL Strategies Scale: Correlation Coefficients between the Total Scale Score and the Subscale Scores

Subscale	2	3	4	4	6	7	Total score
Recitation and memorization	.832**	.722**	.802**	.685**	.696**	.743**	.876**
Elaboration and organization	1	.750**	.833**	.719**	.760**	.813**	.930**
Planning and setting goals		1	.814**	.592**	.647**	.797**	.846**
Self-evaluation and monitoring			1	.754**	.768**	.836**	.938**
Asking for help				1	.778**	.701**	.852**
Search for information					1	.689**	.852**
Environment and time management						1	.902**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To assess the reliability of the scale, Cronbach’s alpha (α) coefficients were calculated for each of the subscales (Table 4). The Cronbach’s alphas for the subscales ranged from 0.729 to 0.875 and the total scale score was 0.891; these indicate that the scale has an acceptable degree of reliability for use with the target sample.

Table 4*Cronbach's alpha Coefficients for the SOL Strategies Scale*

No	Subscale	Items	Cronbach's alpha coefficients
1	Recitation and memorization	4	0.797
2	Elaboration and organization	8	0.729
3	Planning and setting goals	4	0.875
4	Self-evaluation and monitoring	6	0.834
5	Asking for help	5	0.841
6	Search for information	3	0.799
7	Environment and time management	6	0.811
<i>Total scale score</i>		36	0.891

Self-efficacy for Learning and Performance Subscale of the MSLQ

To measure self-efficacy, the eight-item self-efficacy for learning and performance subscale of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990) was used. The Cronbach's alphas for the individual subscales are relatively strong, according to Pintrich et al. (1991), i.e., greater than .70, with the self-efficacy for learning and performance subscale standing as the highest at .93.

In this sample, the validity of the subscale was verified in two ways. The first verification occurred before administration and concerned content validity (reviewers' validity), and the second verification was performed after administration and dealt with construct validity (internal consistency validity). The scale was then modified accordingly.

The internal consistency validity was checked by calculating the correlation coefficients (Pearson) between the individual item scores and the subscale score (Table 5). The resulting correlations ranged from .807 to .906 and were all significant at the 0.01 level, which supports the internal consistency of the subscale items.

Table 5*Self-efficacy for Learning and Performance Subscale of the MSLQ: Correlation Coefficients between the Item Scores and Subscale Score*

No.	Coefficients	No.	Coefficients.	No.	Coefficients	No.	Coefficients
1	.827**	3	.895**	5	.876**	7	.906**
2	.807**	4	.881**	6	.877**	8	.827**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the subscale was calculated as 0.95, which indicates that it has high reliability (Table 6).

Table 6*Self-efficacy for Learning and Performance Subscale of the MSLQ: Cronbach's alpha for the Subscale*

MSLQ	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Self-efficacy for learning and performance subscale	8	0.950

Procedure

A pilot study was conducted within the study context to verify the clarity and reliability of the scales and identify any possible issues with the administration process. The pilot sample was randomly selected and comprised 45 students. After the validity and reliability of the scales were verified using the pilot sample, they were used for the main study, which included 285 students. The questionnaire containing the two scales was distributed and completed online via Google Forms. The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire anonymously. A consent form was provided to inform participants of the objectives of the study and ensure that participation was voluntary. The participants' responses were treated with complete confidentiality and used for scientific research purposes only. To answer the research questions, statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In drafting the items, the clarity of the instructions was taken into account as well as the scales' efficiency in terms of the number and comprehensiveness of the items. Furthermore, to clarify the course subject, the term "English-language course" was added to some items in both scales.

Results and Discussion

To investigate the use of SOL strategies among the sample, the means, standard deviations (SDs), and relative weight of students' scores on the SOL Strategies Scale were calculated (Table 7).

Table 7

Descriptive Analysis of Students' Scores on the SOL Strategies Scale

Subscale	Mean	SD	Relative weight	Rank	Level
Recitation and memorization	23.4	4.9	83.6%	3	High
Elaboration and organization	46.3	9.8	82.7%	4	High
Planning and setting goals	23.8	5.0	85.1%	1	High
Self-evaluation and monitoring	34.2	7.8	81.3%	5	High
Asking for help	26.5	8.1	75.8%	7	High
Search for information	15.9	4.7	75.8%	6	High
Environment and time management	35.2	7.1	83.9%	2	High
Total scale score	205.4	42.4	81.5%	--	High

The mean total scale score was 205.4 with a standard deviation of 42.4 and a relative weight of 81.5%, which indicates that the use of SOL strategies among students was high. The top three mean subscale scores were: (1) planning and setting goals (mean = 23.8, SD = 5.0, relative weight = 85.1%), (2) environment and time management (mean = 35.2, SD = 7.1, relative weight = 83.9%), (3) recitation and memorization (mean = 23.4, SD = 4.9, relative weight = 83.6%). The asking for help strategy was the least used (mean = 26.5, SD = 8.1, relative weight = 75.8%).

The results indicate that students were actively involved in planning their learning and setting specific goals for their academic tasks. This category involves students setting clear objectives and creating a roadmap for their learning process. Preparatory-year students may prioritize planning and goal-setting as SOL strategies because they help them structure their

learning process and track their progress. The results support those of Alotaibi et al. (2017), who found that planning and goal-setting strategies are the most important predictors of academic achievement in English language learning and also reported that other SOL strategies play a supportive role in directing the process of planning and goal-setting.

The second most used SOL category was environment and time management. These strategies emphasize creating a conducive learning environment and effectively managing time to maximize productivity. Preparatory-year students may prioritize environment and time management strategies to minimize distractions and maximize their productivity. By managing their study environment and allocating time efficiently, they can enhance their concentration, and improve overall learning outcomes. The results additionally indicated that students were attentive to creating an optimal learning environment and managing their time efficiently to enhance their learning outcomes. This observation aligns with the study conducted by Mäenpää et al. (2020), which emphasized the importance of proficient environment and time management in successful SOL, particularly within a blended learning context. Notably, Mäenpää and colleagues' study focused on a sample of undergraduate nursing students enrolled in blended learning programs, further highlighting the applicability of their findings to similar educational settings.

Recitation and memorization strategies are extensively used methods in language learning. However, a ranking of third in this study could reflect a shift toward learner-centric methods in EFL teaching. Moreover, students may employ these strategies to consolidate their knowledge, improve their learning retention, and reinforce their learning. These results are in line with the findings of Gaffas (2016), who reported that, due to excessive testing within a very limited time, which may coincide with tests for other courses, students resort to memorization instead of developing a better understanding of English learning material.

The least used strategy was asking for help. This indicates that students were less inclined to seek assistance when they faced challenges in their learning process. Not asking for help might be attributed to cultural issues or learning environments that discourage seeking help. The results provide insights into the significant influence of SOL strategies and their correlation with self-efficacy among EFL learners, indirectly contributing to a deeper understanding of potential factors that may influence help-seeking behaviors and reluctance to seek assistance during the language learning process.

Participants noticeably reported using SOL strategies frequently, as evidenced by the high mean scores and relative weights assigned to the various subscales. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the use of SOL strategies alone does not provide direct evidence of language learning success. The relationship between SOL and language learning outcomes is complex and multifaceted. While the results indicated a high level of SOL strategy use, the effectiveness or proficiency of language learning was not directly measured. To address this limitation, the interpretation of the results focused on the participants' reported use of SOL strategies, highlighting their potential implications for language learning. The results align with existing literature that suggests that SOL plays a vital role in language learning, including EFL education. For instance, research by Zimmerman (2002) and Oxford (2011) has affirmed the significance of SOL for enhancing language learning outcomes.

RQ2: What is the level of self-efficacy for learning and performance among preparatory-year female students from the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University?

The mean, standard deviation, and relative weight of students' scores on the self-efficacy for learning and performance subscale are presented in Table 8. The results indicate a high level of self-efficacy among the sample (mean = 46.5, SD = 10.6, relative weight = 83.0%).

Table 8

Self-efficacy for Learning and Performance Subscale: Descriptive Results

Scale	Mean	SD	Relative weight	Level
Self-efficacy for learning and performance scale	46.5	10.6	83.0%	High

As self-efficacy increases, students' confidence in their learning abilities also improves. The results underscore the importance of nurturing self-efficacy beliefs among EFL students to enhance their perceived language learning outcomes, especially as self-efficacy has been found to interact with motivation, influencing students' drive and commitment to their studies (Wang et al., 2012, Sadi & Uyar, 2013). Our findings suggest that students hold strong self-efficacy beliefs in their language learning abilities. This aligns with the outcomes of Kim et al. (2015), who concluded that students who possess strong self-efficacy beliefs in their language learning abilities demonstrate better language proficiency and overall academic performance. Our study emphasizes the significance of self-efficacy in predicting students' self-perceived language learning outcomes and their confidence in overall academic abilities.

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant correlation between SOL and self-efficacy for learning and performance among preparatory-year female students from the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University?

To answer this question, correlation coefficients were calculated between the SOL Strategy Scale subscale scores and the self-efficacy for learning and performance subscale score (Table 9). There was a significant correlation between the total SOL Strategy Scale score and self-efficacy for learning and performance (.658, significant at the 0.01 level). All the SOL strategies were also significantly associated with self-efficacy for learning and performance; the correlations ranged from .501 to .658 and were statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 9

Pearson Correlation Coefficients between the SOL Strategies (subscale scores) and Self-efficacy for Learning and Performance (Subscale Score)

SOL Strategies	Correlation with the self-efficacy for learning and performance subscale	
Recitation and memorization	.528**	Significant
Elaboration and organization	.608**	Significant
Planning and setting goals	.658**	Significant
Self-evaluation and monitoring	.652**	Significant
Asking for help	.501**	Significant
Search for information	.564**	Significant
Environment and time management	.591**	Significant
Total scale score	.658**	Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Among the SOL strategies, planning and setting goals was the most strongly correlated (positively) with self-efficacy for learning and performance (.658). This indicates that students who effectively plan their learning activities and set clear goals are more likely to have higher levels of self-efficacy, which aligns with results from Chang (2012) and Adesola and Li (2018).

The self-evaluation and monitoring strategies also showed a strong positive correlation with self-efficacy, with a correlation coefficient of .652. This indicates that students who actively monitor their progress and evaluate their learning strategies are more likely to have greater confidence in their abilities. A strong positive correlation between self-evaluation and monitoring strategies and self-efficacy has been observed in past research. For instance, Komarraju and Nadler (2013) report that students with high self-efficacy are more likely to succeed academically because they monitor their progress, self-regulate their efforts, and persevere despite difficulties.

Conversely, the asking for help strategy had the lowest correlation with self-efficacy, with a correlation coefficient of .501. This could be due to cultural factors or it might reflect the fact that students with high self-efficacy feel more confident in their abilities and therefore need to seek less help. However, as Newman (2002) claims, asking for help is an essential SOL strategy that learners must master.

The positive relationship between SOL and self-efficacy indicates that students who actively manage their learning processes and employ effective strategies are more likely to develop stronger confidence in their ability to succeed academically. These findings reinforce the importance of promoting SOL practices to foster self-efficacy among EFL students. Having a strong knowledge base about how to organize one's academic learning processes contributes to increasing self-efficacy. The results of this research are consistent with Yilmaz (2010), which revealed that students with higher self-efficacy used different learning strategies, including memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies, and as a result, achieved better language outcomes. This signifies that fostering both self-efficacy and SOL can enhance language achievement among EFL learners. In conclusion, both SOL and self-efficacy play crucial roles in language learning. They mutually enhance each other and contribute to better

language outcomes. This underscores the importance of pedagogical strategies and curricula that foster SOL and enhance students' self-efficacy in EFL teaching and learning.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study bear the inherent limitations of research that uses self-reporting instruments to obtain data. Possible limitations include social desirability bias, disparate interpretation of the content of the items by the informants, and the fact that some strategies are used unconsciously. This study addresses a gap in the research on SOL strategies in a specific cultural and socio-educational context and contributes to increasing the general body of research on language learning strategies. The findings of this study do not reflect the views of students at other universities in Saudi Arabia; therefore, the generalizability of the findings may be limited to students at the ELI at King Abdulaziz University.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The study provides insight into the use of SOL strategies and their relationship with self-efficacy for learning and performance among female preparatory-year students from the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University. The findings reveal high usage of SOL strategies among students. The different strategies had varied usage among students, with planning and setting goals being the most prevalent strategy, followed by environment and time management, and recitation and memorization. The asking for help strategy was the least used. There were also high levels of self-efficacy among the students, indicating that the English Language Institute has a positive learning environment that fosters confidence in students' learning capabilities and that its teaching practices are potentially beneficial. This is a promising result; as high self-efficacy has been associated with improved language learning outcomes. Finally, the results showed a significant correlation between SOL strategies and self-efficacy for learning and performance. This relationship was most significant with regard to planning and goal setting strategies, which emphasizes the important role that such SOL strategies play in enhancing students' beliefs in their capabilities.

These findings have pedagogical implications in that, to support students' academic success, educators should focus on fostering strategies that enhance students' self-organization skills and boost their confidence in their learning capabilities. SOL strategies can be explicitly taught in the EFL context, and learning is more effective if it is linked to specific content (e.g., grammar or phonetics) rather than abstract concepts. In some areas, such as reading and writing, it may be relevant and desirable to teach different general SOL comprehension strategies. Teachers can include SOL objectives for teaching metacognitive knowledge in regular teaching units alongside subject-specific content and teach and assess these in a way that allows students to use the strategies. For example, during lessons, teachers can identify opportunities to discuss metacognitive knowledge, such as in reading groups, where SOL strategies can be used to analyze a section of a story. This explicit approach will help students to connect their learning with other previously acquired concepts and strategies. Incorporating a discussion of SOL strategies into English course discourse can help foster a common language that will support students to talk about their own cognition and learning. In conclusion, these pedagogical implications can leverage the identified links between SOL strategies and self-efficacy to enhance the EFL teaching and learning process.

It is strongly recommended that educational institutions prioritize the promotion of SOL strategies by enhancing and diversifying teaching methods for both general education (school-age) and university students. This includes developing academic curricula that align with the varying levels of SOL strategy use among EFL students. There should be a strong emphasis on introducing the concept of SOL into the early stages of education to maximize its benefits throughout the learning journey. Further research should explore SOL and other potential factors that might influence EFL in the Saudi context, such as economic status, learning styles, motivation toward learning English, and student and teacher personality traits and their relationship to university students' SOL strategies, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of ways to support students in their educational journey. This will provide a deeper understanding that will lead to a more meaningful application of SOL in the educational field.

Bio

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Attitudes Towards Euphemistic Codeswitching in Job Titles in the Saudi Context

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Received: 4/6/2023; Revised: 4/9/2023; Accepted: 10/09/2023

المخلص

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 3

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 4
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 5
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 6
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 7*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 8*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 9*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.

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English as a Medium of Education (EME): Gender, Attitudes, and Cumulative GPA

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Received: 7/8/2023; Revised: 25/9/2023; Accepted: 25/9/2023

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في تأثير استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتعليم في التخصصات العلمية والطبية والهندسية على أداء الطلاب وآرائهم الأكاديمية، بالإضافة إلى وجهات نظر مدرسي المقررات في هذه التخصصات. تعتمد الدراسة على تصميم متعدد الأساليب من خلال تحليل البيانات من ثلاث مصادر: سجلات الخريجين (عددهم 7272)، واستبيان لمدرسي المقررات (عددهم 341)، واستبيان تم توزيعه على الطلاب الحاليين في التخصصات العلمية والتقنية (عددهم 1678). تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام مجموعة متنوعة من الأساليب الإحصائية، بما في ذلك: تحليل الارتباط، واختبار الفروق بين العينات المستقلة، وتحليل الانحدار المتعدد. أظهرت النتائج تسعة نتائج رئيسية. أظهرت سجلات الخريجين ترابطاً مهماً بين معدل النجاح العام للخريجين ودرجات مقرر اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمي في السنة الأولى؛ فروعاً معنوية بين جنس الخريجين ومعدل النجاح العام في البرامج عند التخرج؛ عدم وجود فروق معنوية بين جنس الخريجين ودرجات مقرر اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمي في السنة التحضيرية؛ وأن جنس الخريجين ودرجات مقرر اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمي يمكن أن يتنبأ بشكل مهم بمعدل النجاح العام للخريجين من هذه التخصصات. أما نتائج استبيان مدرسي المقررات، فأشارت إلى أن معظمهم كان لديهم آراء إيجابية حول مستوى طلابهم في اللغة الإنجليزية، مما يشير إلى اتجاهات إيجابية نحو سياسة استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتعليم. أما نتائج استبيان الطلاب الحاليين، فأشارت إلى أن معظم الطلاب كان لديهم اتجاهات سلبية ومعتقدات اجتماعية واعتقادات بفعالية الذات سلبية نحو سياسة استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتعليم. كان معظم الطلاب يفضلون اللغة العربية كوسيلة للتعليم ويعتقدون أنهم سيحصلون على معدل نجاح أعلى إذا تعلموا باللغة العربية في هذه التخصصات. كما ظهرت فروق معنوية بين جنس الطلاب والوسيلة المفضلة للتعليم بناءً على اتجاهاتهم ومعتقداتهم الاجتماعية واعتقاداتهم بمقدرتهم الذاتية. لذلك يجب على واضعي السياسات التعليمية باللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتعليم أن يأخذوا في الاعتبار تأثير السياسة اللغوية على معدلات النجاح للطلاب في هذه التخصصات وأن يدركوا أن جنس الطلاب يلعب دوراً كبيراً في إنجازاتهم واتجاهاتهم في برامج التعليم باللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتعليم. إن نجاح برامج التعليم باللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتعليم يعتمد بشكل كبير على مستوى الكفاءة اللغوية للطلاب الذين يتم قبولهم. كما يحتاج مدرسو المقررات أيضاً إلى تدريب على تدريس المحتوى للطلاب الذين لا يتحدثون الإنجليزية بطلاقة ويجب عليهم أن يأخذوا في اعتبارهم صعوبات طلابهم في برامج التعليم باللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتعليم.



Abstract

This study aims to investigate the impact of English as a Medium of Education (EME) on students' academic performance and attitudes, as well as content instructors' perspectives. The study employs a multi-method design by analyzing data from three resources: alumni records (n=7272), a survey of content instructors (n=341), and a questionnaire administered to current EME students (n=1678). The data was analyzed using a variety of statistical methods, including: correlation analysis, independent samples t-test, and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed nine main findings. Alumni records showed a significant correlation between alumni CGPA and foundation-year EAP course grades; a significant difference between alumni gender and CGPA; no significant difference between alumni gender and foundation year EAP course grades; and that alumni gender and EAP course grades can significantly predict alumni CGPA. The content instructors' questionnaire results indicated that most content instructors had positive views on their students' English language proficiency, which indicates indirectly positive attitudes toward the EME policy. The current students' questionnaire results showed that most of the students had negative attitudes, normative beliefs, and self-efficacy beliefs toward the EME policy. Most students preferred Arabic as the medium of education and believed that they would have a higher GPA if they were educated in Arabic. There were significant differences between students' gender and preferred medium of education based on their attitudes, normative beliefs, and self-efficacy beliefs. EME policymakers should consider the impact of language policy on students' GPAs and recognize that students' gender plays a major role in their achievements and attitudes in EME programs. The success of EME programs depends considerably on admitted students' level of proficiency. Content instructors also need training on teaching content to students who cannot speak English fluently and should consider their students' struggles in EME programs.

Keywords: *Content instructors' attitudes; English as medium of instruction (EMI); language policy; medium of education, English as a medium of education (EME)*

Introduction

The introduction of English language teaching (ELT) in Saudi Arabia gradually gained importance after being introduced in the 1920s. The subject has been progressively incorporated into the school curriculum, with English originally being taught in grade 7. This was changed to grades 5 and 6 in 2003 and, finally, to grade 4 in 2012. In the first semester of the 2021-2022 academic year, the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced ELT beginning in the first grade of primary school (Alsuhaibani et al., 2023).

English as a Medium of Education (EME) policy is the official policy in science, healthcare, and engineering programs at Saudi universities. It might be better to use the term EME instead of English as medium of instruction in this paper to emphasize the educational dimensions of teaching and learning (Macaro & Rose, 2023). In Saudi universities, admitted students are not required to take a standardized English proficiency test, making it difficult to assess their English language proficiency at the time of enrollment (McMullen, 2014). Although Saudi students begin learning English in elementary school, policymakers have found that their English language proficiency is generally low at the time of university enrollment (Alhamami, 2019). This suggests that it is not sufficient for students to simply join EME programs.

In response to this challenge, Saudi universities have established a foundation year/ a preparatory year to teach English (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017; McMullen, 2014). These foundation/preparatory years typically last one year and are designed to help students improve their English language skills to a level that is sufficient for university studies. However, the existence of foundation years suggests that there are gaps in secondary school preparation for university studies (Johnson & Tweedie, 2017). Additionally, there is often a mismatch between students' and teachers' views of EME (Johnson & Tweedie, 2017). Despite these efforts, the transition from the Arabic medium of education in compulsory education to EME in college programs poses challenges for Saudi undergraduate students. These challenges include: low English proficiency levels (Alhamami, 2019), gaps in secondary school preparation (Johnson & Tweedie, 2017), and mismatched views of EME between students and teachers (Johnson & Tweedie, 2017). These challenges can lead to negative attitudes among Saudi undergraduate students towards EME and can impede their academic success.

This study used big data to explore the EME policy's impact in a Saudi public university. It examined this impact in 26 undergraduate programs in four major schools: engineering, the sciences, computers, and healthcare. The study examined the relationships among undergraduates' English proficiency level in the foundation year, their gender, and their achievement of program learning outcomes, as indicated by their CGPA after graduation. Moreover, it analyzed content instructors' attitudes toward the EME policy. Next, the study used Ajzen's theory of planned behavior to examine the relationships among the current students' attitude, normative beliefs, and self-efficacy beliefs. Finally, the study examined the relationship among Ajzen's these three constructs and current students' gender in EME programs as well as how these three constructs interact with their preferred medium of education.

The study addresses several critical gaps in the existing literature on EME in Saudi Arabia. Despite the early introduction of ELT in Saudi schools, students often exhibit low

English proficiency upon entering university, which adversely impacts their performance in EME programs. This issue is further compounded by the inadequacy of secondary education in preparing students for university-level English instruction, as evidenced by the establishment of foundation years in universities. Additionally, there is a notable divergence between the perspectives of students and instructors regarding the efficacy and appropriateness of EME, as will be illustrated in the literature review. The study also aims to explore the influence of gender on both academic performance and attitudes toward EME, an aspect not extensively scrutinized in existing literature. Lastly, prior research has not employed large-scale data to holistically examine the impact of EME across diverse disciplines, incorporating variables such as gender, attitudes, and academic performance.

This study utilizes large-scale data for investigating the impact of EME across 26 undergraduate programs in four major academic disciplines within a Saudi public university. Beyond academic performance, the study also investigates the attitudes and beliefs of both students and content instructors, offering a comprehensive understanding of the EME landscape. By employing Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, the study provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the intricate relationships among students' attitudes, normative beliefs, and self-efficacy. The study introduces a gender-based analysis into the EME discourse, thereby adding a critical dimension that is particularly relevant in the Saudi educational context. The findings have immediate relevance for educational policymakers, especially concerning language policy and instructor training. These insights could inform future interventions aimed at enhancing the efficacy of EME programs. The adoption of a multi-method research design and the application of diverse statistical methods contribute to the study's credibility and depth, thereby making it a significant addition to the fields of applied linguistics and educational policy.

Literature Review

Grade Point Average and English for Academic Purposes Courses

The importance of GPA has drawn the attention of researchers from different academic disciplines. Scholars and practitioners widely accept student GPA as a leading marker of success in school (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). The impact of the EME policy on students' achievement can be seen via their GPA. CGPA is an excellent indicator of students' performance and achievement of program learning outcomes (Dang & Dang, 2021). It is calculated over the duration of a student's enrollment in a program. In many universities worldwide, CGPA is used to measure students' academic performance, acknowledge excellence, and determine recipients of Excellence Awards (e.g., the Dean's list is based on a student's GPA). Higher GPAs are positively associated with not only cognitive ability but also a wide range of non-cognitive skills such as self-esteem, self-discipline, achievement orientation, conscientiousness, and openness (Qian & Yavorsky, 2021). Researchers have examined GPA's influence on and correlation with different variables such as gender (Bećirović et al., 2018), high school background (Allensworth & Clark, 2020), social status (Loeb & Hurd, 2019), and the personality trait of conscientiousness (Nguyen et al., 2005). For example, Hsieh et al. (2007) found that students with lower GPAs were more likely to display performance-avoiding behaviors, and in contrast, students with higher GPAs were more prone to mastery goal orientation.

Language proficiency level can affect students' understanding of content in EME programs. Tenney et al. (2020) found that English language scores correlate more strongly with academic performance than mathematics, chemistry, or Chinese language scores in an EME pharmacy program in Hong Kong. Researchers found that English proficiency standardized tests such as IELTS and TOEFL predict undergraduates' academic achievements, as indicated by their GPA (Schoepp, 2018). However, validity studies investigating the predictive validity of TOEFL and IELTS, expressed as the correlation between test scores and GPA, have yielded different results (Dimova, 2020). For example, Bridgeman et al. (2016) found that Chinese students with lower TOEFL scores performed similarly, on average, to other students, implying that TOEFL scores cannot predict students' performance. The use of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course grades may be a helpful predictor of students' language proficiency (Dimova, 2020), and EAP courses are designed specifically to help students succeed in the university setting and achieve better grades.

Gender and Academic Major

Pun and Jin (2021) argued that research on EME education has rarely focused on gender effects in learning, and little evidence could be empirically obtained. Gender is a critical factor that may influence students' CGPA and language proficiency (Macaro & Akincioglu, 2018). However, Reus (2020) examined native Spanish speakers' performance in an EME program at a Chilean engineering school. Reus found that performance differences can primarily be attributed to students' performance in previous courses. Language, gender, and attendance have a limited and weak influence in explaining performance differences. Moreover, Kamaşak et al. (2021) found that gender was not clearly related to challenges experienced by students in the Japanese EME context, with the exception of listening. Moreover, Kong and Wei (2019) found no gender effects. They conducted two independent-sample t-tests, and their results showed statistically non-significant differences. More specifically, females scored almost the same as males. The researchers also found positive attitudes toward the EME policy: The participants reported slightly favorable attitudes toward EME.

An academic major or concentration is another critical factor that may influence students' goal to achieve language proficiency levels. Browsing the program conditions on admission online reveals that the linguistics department requires a higher IELTS score than the mathematics department. University students' main field of specialization may impact their final CGPA. Students in fields that require higher English proficiency may achieve a lower GPA because of their lower English proficiency. Soruç et al. (2021) stressed that the language proficiency threshold varies according to the academic division. Altay et al., (2022) investigated the academic achievement of EMI courses in Turkey and found that English language proficiency was a strong predictor of academic achievement for social science students, while success in Turkish medium instruction (TMI) courses predicted EMI success for mathematical, physical, and life sciences students. Yuksel et al., (2023) found that both self-regulation and proficiency impacted EMI students' academic success in engineering, while only proficiency predicted academic success in the social sciences.

Views of Content Instructors and Students

Content instructors, teachers who teach a subject other than language, such as mathematics, computer engineering, and pharmacy, are important stakeholders in EME classrooms (Macaro et al., 2021). These instructors might hold different perspectives than students (Alhamami & Almelhi, 2021). Their attitudes toward students' English proficiency in EME can explain different behaviors in EME classes, such as students' participation in class discussions and written answers on exams. Alhamami (2015) found that most Arabic-speaking scientists in Saudi Arabia support the use of Arabic to teach science subjects in undergraduate programs. Abouzeid (2021) concluded that curriculum designers in EME programs should reconcile instructors' perceptions with the reality of their students' linguistic proficiency and learning needs. Research has also indicated that EME teachers need professional development to teach effectively (Macaro et al., 2020). Teaching in EME demands a high level of proficiency in the language. Teachers need to be not only proficient in English themselves but also able to guide students effectively in using English for academic purposes. Effective EME instruction goes beyond language proficiency; it requires specific pedagogical skills. Teachers should be trained in methods and strategies for teaching content in a language that may not be the students' first language. Assessing students' language and content knowledge in an EME context can be challenging. Professional development helps teachers develop appropriate assessment tools and provide constructive feedback to students.

Undergraduates' perspectives are crucial variables in EME programs (Alhamami, 2019). Undergraduates' self-efficacy beliefs contribute to their engagement in their classes (Thompson et al., 2019): Those with stronger efficacy put forth more effort and regard course activities as development opportunities. Negative attitudes toward EME policy influence undergraduates' behavior in their classes and their achievement of learning outcomes. Social pressure and the opinions of people around undergraduates influence their intention to study and participate in class activities (Alhamami, 2020). Based on the context, undergraduates' concerns regarding their GPA might influence their views toward EME policy. For example, Rose and colleagues (2020) found that students with higher TOEIC scores had an advantage over those with lower proficiency in passing a content course at a Japanese university. However, all students, regardless of their proficiency level, were able to pass the course. The participants also believed that the benefits they gained from the EME program were more important than their GPA.

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

This study employs Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the foundational framework to explore four key constructs: (i) intention, (ii) attitude toward behavior (AB), (iii) subjective norms (SN), and (iv) perceived behavioral control (PBC). Drawing upon theories from social psychology, particularly TPB, enriches the understanding of human behaviors and has been shown to yield insightful results in different disciplines (Ajzen, 2020). In the TPB model, intention serves as a direct precursor to behavior, reflecting an individual's willingness to engage in a specific action. In the context of EMI, students' intentions to engage with English-mediated courses are influenced by their AB, SN, and PBC. In the context of this study, AB refers to the individual's evaluative disposition toward participating in EMI courses,

whether positive or negative. This study aims to assess EMI students' attitudes, both positive and negative, toward EMI and how these attitudes influence their academic engagement.

SN, the second construct, encapsulates the perceived social pressures or expectations from significant others—such as peers, family, and instructors—that influence a student's decision to engage or disengage with EMI courses. This study will explore the subjective norms affecting EMI students in their educational settings. The final construct, PBC, represents an individual's perceived self-efficacy or capability to successfully engage in EMI courses. This study will examine the factors that EMI students believe either facilitate or hinder their successful engagement with English-mediated courses. The study posits that students with positive AB, SN, and PBC are likely to have a strong intention to engage with EMI courses, which in turn is expected to correlate with successful academic outcomes. Conversely, negative perceptions in these constructs are anticipated to correlate with weaker intentions to engage in EMI classes and, consequently, less successful academic outcomes. By employing TPB, this study aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the cognitive and social factors influencing students' engagement and success in EMI settings.

Research Questions

Reviewing the literature revealed that the findings of EME studies vary based on educational, social, political, and economic contexts. Moreover, the impact of important variables in EME programs such as CGPA, gender, academic discipline, language proficiency, content instructors' views, and students' attitudes needs to be analyzed. This study made several contributions to the literature. First, it examined big data from alumni university records. Analyzing alumni records enabled us to understand the relationship between undergraduates' initial proficiency level and achievements of program learning outcomes, as indicated in their transcripts by EAP courses grades and CGPAs after graduation. Second, it examined the impact of English proficiency level and gender on CGPA. Next, the study analyzed the views of content instructors from different academic disciplines regarding EME policy. Finally, the study investigated the relationship between current EME undergraduates' attitudes toward the EME policy, self-efficacy in EME programs, and normative beliefs regarding EME policy and how students' gender interacts with these three constructs.

Q1. What are the relationships between EME alumni CGPA, gender, and students' foundation year EAP course grades in Saudi EME undergraduate programs?

Q2. What are the content instructors' views on their students' English language proficiency in Saudi EME undergraduate programs?

Q3. What are the interrelationships of current undergraduates' attitudes, self-efficacy beliefs, normative beliefs, and gender in Saudi EME undergraduate programs?

Methodology

Multimethod research involves combining any different methods, while mixed methods research more specifically focuses on combining qualitative and quantitative methods (Hunter & Brewer, 2015). The present study employs a multi-method research design to comprehensively investigate the impact of EME on various stakeholders, namely students and content instructors, as well as to explore its correlation with students' academic performance.

This design allows for a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between language policy, gender, attitudes, and academic achievement within the context of a Saudi public university. The multi-method approach integrates three quantitative data resources, collected from three distinct sources: alumni records, a survey of content instructors, and a questionnaire administered to current EME students.

The data, derived from alumni records, student questionnaires, and instructor questionnaires, were subjected to a variety of statistical analyses, including correlation analysis, independent samples t-tests, and multiple regression analysis. These analyses aimed to identify patterns and relationships among variables such as gender, CGPA, attitudes toward EME, and insights into instructors' attitudes and perspectives on EME. This multi-method design is particularly advantageous for addressing the study's research questions from multiple angles, offering a more holistic view of the subject matter. It also enhances the validity and reliability of the study by enabling data triangulation. The following sections will elaborate on the instruments used, the participants involved, and the procedures followed in data collection and analysis.

Sampling Techniques

In the study, a variety of sampling techniques were applied. Initially, alumni records data included all recent graduates from the past five years, essentially covering the entire recent graduate population. It's important to note that no specific sampling method was employed in this particular case. For the selection of samples from the current EME student and content instructor populations across four colleges (healthcare, engineering, computer, and sciences), the researchers opted for stratified random sampling. They first categorized the students and instructors into strata based on their respective colleges and then randomly picked a sample of students from each stratum. Each student and instructor have the chance to answer the questionnaire. This approach was chosen to ensure that the sample accurately represented the entire population of EME students and content instructors. Stratified random sampling is a type of sampling where the population is divided into groups (strata) based on a specific characteristic, such as age, gender, or region. Then, a random sample is selected from each stratum. This method is used to ensure that the sample is representative of the population with respect to the stratification variable.

Instruments and Participants

The researcher used three data sources to collect data from a Saudi public university. The first source was the EME undergraduate program alumni records. The Division of Alumni Records at the Deanship of Admission and Registrations sent the alumni database for the previous five years in an Excel sheet. The database contains alumni names, university IDs, colleges, academic majors, foundation year EAP course grades, and CGPA. The total number of records for the alumni was 7,272. The alumni attended eight colleges that followed the EME policy. Of the alumni, 2,887 (40%) were female, and 4,385 (60%) were male. They attended 26 undergraduate programs in eight colleges. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of the alumni and classifies their gender based on colleges.

Table 1*Alumni Gender by College n = 7272*

College	Females n (%)	Males n (%)
1. Applied Medical n = 1300 (18%)	n = 679 (24%)	n = 621 (14%)
2. Computer n = 1316 (18%)	n = 580 (20%)	n = 736 (17%)
3. Engineering n = 1451 (20%)	n = 0 (0.00%)	n = 1451 (33%)
4. Medicine n = 592 (8%)	n = 201 (7%)	n = 391 (9%)
5. Nursing n = 204 (3%)	n = 182 (6%)	n = 22 (0.5%)
6. Pharmacy n = 605 (8%)	n = 318 (11%)	n = 287 (7%)
7. Science n = 1461 (20%)	n = 787 (27%)	n = 674 (15%)
8. Dentistry n = 343 (5%)	n = 140 (5%)	n = 203 (5%)
Total n = 7272	Total n = 2887	Total n = 4385

Students are admitted to EME programs in Saudi universities based on a complex ratio criterion, which includes their cumulative high school grade point average (GPA) (30%), their scores on the General Aptitude Test (GAT) (30%), and their scores on the Academic Achievement Test for Scientific Specializations (40%). All students enrolled in an EME undergraduate program must take and pass the EAP course in their first year. The EAP course is an intensive integrated-skills course that focuses on the four main English skills - reading, writing, speaking and listening. It is designed to develop the English language proficiency of students at the A2 and B1 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The second data source was the content instructors' questionnaire. It did not include demographic information, but the university website lists the countries where the instructors are from, as well as their mother tongues. The questionnaire was written in English and Arabic and contained six questions on the instructor's attitudes using a six-unipolar scale and one question using a three-unipolar scale. The questionnaire items were validated by six university instructors in the same institution. Based on their comments and suggestions, the questionnaire items were revised.

Four versions of the same questionnaire were sent to the four academic major disciplines using their official university emails: healthcare, computer, engineering, and sciences. The researcher created four versions by changing the adjectives in each question (e.g., from healthcare to engineering). Therefore, the instructors felt that the questionnaire items were related to their academic areas. We categorized all healthcare colleges (Applied Medical Sciences, Dentistry, Medicine & Surgery, and Pharmacy) as one academic major. The total number of content instructors was 341. Table 2 shows the content of instructors' colleges. The Cronbach's alpha for content instructors' attitudes toward students in the EME policy classes was 0.95. In this survey, the instructors' attitudes towards EME were measured indirectly due to concerns about their willingness and ability to accurately report their attitudes in response to direct inquiries. This is a well-established approach in psychology, as implicit measures of attitudes are less susceptible to social desirability bias than explicit measures. In this case, the instructors' attitudes were measured indirectly through their perceptions of students' proficiency levels in English.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics for the Content Instructors (n = 341)*

Content Instructor Colleges	N (%)
1. Applied Medical Sciences (Healthcare)	41 (12%)
2. Computer College	42 (12%)
3. Dentistry (Healthcare)	24 (7%)
4. Engineering College	54 (16%)
5. Medicine & Surgery (Healthcare)	35 (10%)
6. Pharmacy (Healthcare)	34 (10%)
7. Science College	111 (33%)
Total	341 (100%)

The third data source was the current undergraduate questionnaire. The students' questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part collects demographic information, including the students' gender and college. The second part consists of six-point scale items that measure three constructs adapted from Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The researcher followed established guidelines (e.g., Ajzen, 2019; Francis et al., 2004) to create a valid and reliable survey to measure the TPB four constructs. The researcher also used previously published questionnaires that used the TPB as a theoretical framework in language-learning contexts (e.g., Alhamami, 2018) as a starting point for designing the final survey. The three items measuring attitude had a Cronbach's α of .93. In the context of this study, attitude refers to a student's positive or negative evaluation of learning content in EME undergraduate programs. The second set of three items measures the participants' self-efficacy; Cronbach's α = .92. In the context of this study, self-efficacy refers to students' perceptions of their ability to learn content in EME undergraduate programs. The last construct on the six-point scale was normative beliefs, with a Cronbach's α of .92. In the context of this study, normative beliefs refer to the belief that an important person or group of people will approve of and support learning content in EME undergraduate programs. Questionnaire items were presented in a non-systematic order in the survey to ensure reliability. In other words, the questions used to assess attitude were interspersed with questions to measure normative beliefs and self-efficacy beliefs.

The last part of the current students' questionnaire uses a two-point scale. Two items elicited students' opinions regarding their GPA and exam answers in relation to EME. The last question asked students directly about their preferred medium of education: Arabic or English. Four versions of the same questionnaire were designed and sent to target students. Each version mentioned the respective student's general academic major: healthcare, computers, engineering, and sciences. Therefore, the students felt more that the questionnaire addressed them specifically. The student questionnaire was posted online on the students' Blackboard site with assistance from the Deanship of E-Learning. For example, the engineering questionnaire was posted on the engineering students' Blackboard site, and the science questionnaire was posted on the science students' Blackboard site. A total of 1678 undergraduates responded to the questionnaire: 250 (15%) attending programs in the College of Computer, 301 (18%) attending undergraduate programs in the College of Engineering, 358 (21%) attending undergraduate programs in the healthcare colleges, and 769 (46%) attending undergraduate programs in the College of Sciences.

The researchers obtained ethical clearance from the university's ethics committee and permission from the university administration to conduct the study. They used an online consent form to inform the students and instructors that their participation was voluntary. The students' consent form was composed in Arabic, and the instructors' consent form was provided in both Arabic and English. All the data were collected from a public Saudi university located in the southern part of Saudi Arabia.

Results

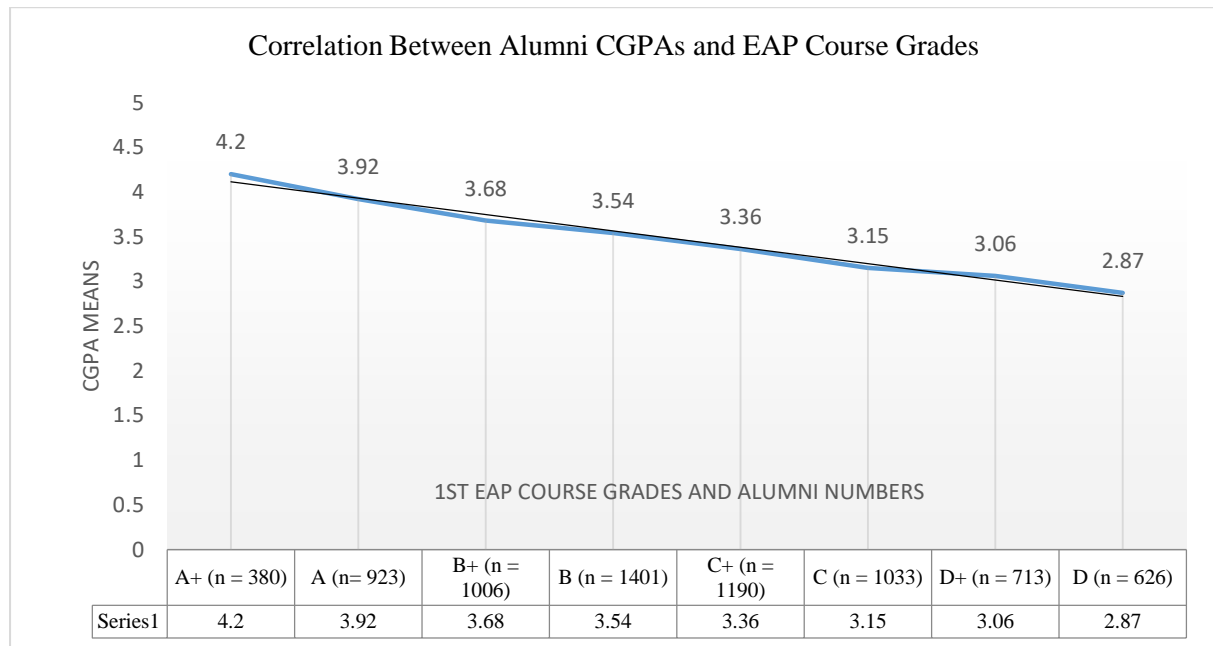
The results of the three data sources can be classified into nine parts.

1. Correlation Between Alumni CGPA and EAP Grades

To determine the relationship between alumni English proficiency in the first year and their CGPA after finishing the undergraduate program, the alumni grades in the EAP course were converted to numerals using the university grading system. A correlation test was conducted. The correlation between the continuous variables, alumni CGPA, and EAP course grades was computed using Pearson's r . The two variables were correlated at $r(7269) = .473$, $p < .01$. The alumni CGPA ranged from 2 to 5 ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.73$, $n = 7272$), as did The EAP course grades ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.89$, $n = 7272$). Figure 1 illustrates the correlation between alumni English proficiency levels in the first year and their CGPA after finishing the program.

Figure 1

Correlation CGPA and EAP Course Grades



2. Differences in CGPA Based on Alumni Gender

To determine any differences in CGPA based on alumni gender, a t-test was conducted. The t-test is a method that determines whether two populations are statistically different from each other. It investigates the differences in means and the spread of the distributions (i.e., variance) across groups. The data were analyzed using an independent sample t-test. The gender of the alumni was related to their CGPA, $t(7270) = 20.244$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.485$. Female

alumni CGPA was higher ($m = 3.66$, $SD = 0.70$, $n = 2887$) than male alumni CGPA ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.71$, $n = 4385$). The mean difference was 0.34, with a standard deviation of .002.

3. Differences in EAP Courses Grades Based on Alumni Gender

Next, a t-test was conducted to determine the differences in EAP courses scores based on alumni gender. There were no significant differences between the alumni EAP scores based on their gender. Table 3 illustrates the means and standardized deviations of alumni males and females based on their CGPA and EAP course grades.

Table 3

Males' and Females' Average CGPA and EAP Course Grades (n = 7272)

CGPA		EAP Course Grades	
Female (n = 2887)	Male (n = 4385)	Female (n = 2887)	Male (n = 4385)
Mean (SD)			
3.66 (0.70)	3.32 (0.71)	3.66 (0.89)	3.68 (0.90)

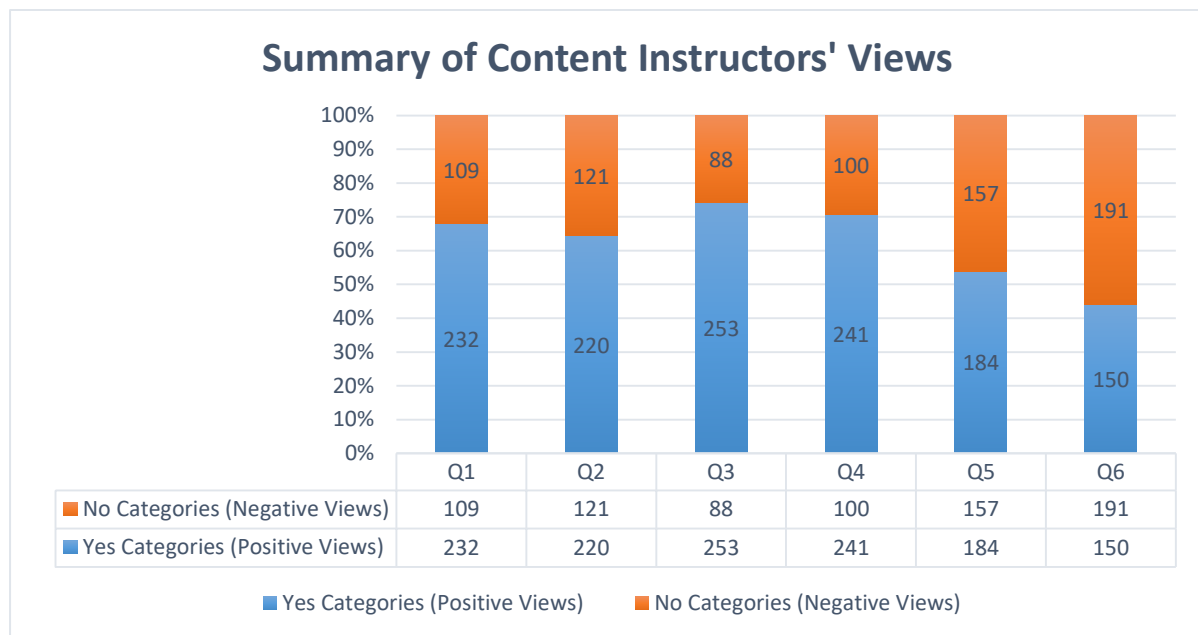
4. Prediction of Alumni CGPA by Gender and EAP Course Grades

To predict alumni CGPA based on gender and English proficiency at the beginning of undergraduate programs, a multiple regression test was conducted. Multiple linear regression was calculated to predict the alumni's CGPA based on gender and their grade in their first intensive EAP course ($n = 7227$). A significant regression equation was found, $F(2, 7269) = 1408.159$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .28. The two variables considered together significantly predicted the alumni's CGPA. The gender variable is a significant predictor, with a slope of .35 ($p = .001$); 2.243 quantified the Y-intercept for our regression equation. EAP course grades are a significant predictor, with a slope of .39 ($p = .001$); 2.243 quantified the Y-intercept for our regression equation.

5. Content Instructors' Questionnaire Results

Figure 2 summarizes the content instructors' views on students' English proficiency in the classroom. The first part of the scale indicates positive views (strongly yes, somewhat yes, and slightly yes). The second part of the questionnaire scale indicates negative views (slightly no, somewhat no, and strongly no). Most content instructors showed positive views on all of the questions except question 6. The percentages of their positive views are as follows: Q1 (68%), Q2 (65%), Q3 (74%), Q4 (71%), Q5 (54%), and Q6 (44%). In other words, content instructors have a lower percentage of negative views regarding all questions except question 6 (56%), for which they expressed higher negative views.

Figure 2
Summary of Content Instructors' Views



6. Six-Point Likert Scale Items: Current Student Questionnaire

The next section presents the correlation among three constructs: students' attitude toward the EME policy, students' normative beliefs, and students' self-efficacy beliefs. Using the mean of the three items that measure each construct, a Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationships among current students' attitudes toward EME ($m = 4.25$, $SD = 1.73$), self-efficacy ($m = 4.21$, $SD = 1.68$), and students' societal beliefs ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.71$). These three variables were significantly correlated. Students' attitude was significantly correlated with their self-efficacy, $r(1676) = .877$, $p = .001$, their self-efficacy was strongly positively related to their normative beliefs, $r(1676) = .854$, $p = .001$, and their attitude was strongly positively related to their normative beliefs, $r(1676) = .885$, $p = .001$.

7. Two-Point Likert Scale Items: Students' Preferred Language of Education

The two-point Likert scale items infer students' preferred medium of education and views regarding their GPA. The first two-point Likert scale item asked the students if they think that their current GPA would be higher if they studied the subjects in their mother tongue, Arabic. In total, 1,213 (72%) chose yes, and 465 (28%) chose no. The next two-point Likert scale question asked the students if they have faced difficulties in understanding and answering exam questions in English; 1,473 (88%) chose yes, and 205 (12%) chose no. The last question asked the participants about their preferred medium of education in their academic major, for which 1,304 (78%) chose Arabic, and 374 (22%) chose English.

8. Gender and Current Students' Attitudes, Normative Beliefs, and Self-efficacy Beliefs

Only 1,125 participants in the questionnaire mentioned their gender. Therefore, in the following tests, the sample size decreased from 1,678 to 1,125. The means for attitude, normative beliefs, and Self-efficacy with standard deviations for each group are presented in Table 4. The one-way between-groups multivariate analysis revealed a significant overall effect, $Wilks' \Lambda = 0.966$, $f(1, 1123) = 13.132$, $p = .001$. There was a statistically significant interaction effect between gender and survey answers on dependent variables; female

participants showed a higher negative attitude toward the EME policy, as indicated by their higher means in all three constructs.

Table 4

Group Descriptive Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE
Attitude Mean	Female	652	4.608	1.727	0.068
	Male	475	4.160	1.725	0.079
Normative beliefs Mean	Female	652	4.810	1.621	0.063
	Male	475	4.289	1.713	0.079
Self-efficacy Mean	Female	652	4.704	1.632	0.064
	Male	475	4.131	1.703	0.078

9. EME and Current Students' Attitudes, Normative Beliefs, and Self-efficacy Beliefs

The means for attitude, normative beliefs, and self-efficacy with standard deviations for each group are presented in Table 5. The one-way between-groups multivariate analysis revealed a significant overall effect, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.431$ $f(1, 1123) = 494.724$ $p = .001$. There was a statistically significant interaction effect between students' preferred medium of education and survey answers regarding the dependent variables: The participants who chose Arabic had more negative views toward the EME policy, as indicated by their higher means for all three constructs.

Table 5

Group Descriptive Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
Attitude Mean	in Arabic	912	5.046	1.222	0.040
	in English	215	1.760	0.890	0.061
Normative beliefs Mean	in Arabic	912	5.180	1.167	0.039
	in English	215	2.090	1.135	0.077
Self-efficacy Mean	in Arabic	912	5.030	1.263	0.042
	in English	215	2.057	0.984	0.067

Discussion

The results show interesting findings that contribute to our understanding of the impact of the EME policy on content learning, gender in EME undergraduate programs, and the views of content specialists. There was a significant positive correlation between the EME undergraduate alumni CGPA and their foundation year EAP course grades ($r = .47$). The findings demonstrate that the higher the grade undergraduates achieve in the foundation year English intensive course, the higher the GPA they will achieve after completing four- or five-year undergraduate programs. This finding demonstrates the importance of English proficiency in the achievement of program learning outcomes, as indicated by students' GPAs. The findings demonstrate the average expected GPA of alumni based on their foundation year EAP course grades. For example, the average CGPA of undergraduates who achieved an A+ in the EAP course was 4.20, and the average CGPA of undergraduates who achieved a D in the EAP course was 2.87. This supports Dimova's (2020) argument that EAP courses are better

indicators of students' language proficiency in EME programs because they are designed specifically to help students succeed in university and achieve better grades. These findings demonstrate that higher GPAs are positively associated with several cognitive and non-cognitive abilities (Qian & Yavorsky, 2021).

Alumni gender is an important factor that correlates with CGPA. The t-test results show that females achieved a higher GPA, with a mean of $m = 3.66$, than males, who had a mean of 3.32. In EME undergraduate programs, women achieved better learning outcomes than men. The results are in line with findings by other researchers (Macaro & Akincioglu, 2018; Pun & Jin, 2021) that gender is an important factor to be investigated because it influences students' performance. One factor might be gender segregation in Saudi education at all levels. However, there was no significant difference between males and females in language proficiency, as indicated by their EAP course grades. Surprisingly, females achieved a slightly lower mean grade (3.66) in the EAP course than males ($m = 3.68$). This might indicate that gender influences students' grades in the long term. Gender might not influence students' grades in a short-term program (e.g., a one-year EAP program) but might influence their overall grades in the four undergraduate programs. This finding supports Kamaşak et al.'s (2021) findings in the Japanese context. They found that gender was not clearly related to the challenges experienced by students in the EME context. Similar findings were reported by Kong and Wei (2019), who found that females scored almost the same as males.

Multiple regression test results show that undergraduate CGPA can be predicted by both students' grades in the EAP program and their genders. Both variables can explain 28% of the variation in the alumni CGPA. This shows that EAP course grades and genders play an important role in students' learning of content in EME programs. Policymakers can use both variables to explain specific outcomes in the learning environment, such as higher grades, students' participation, and students' performance in exams. Similarly, Tenney et al. (2020) found that English language scores correlate more strongly with academic performance than mathematics, chemistry, or Chinese language scores in the EME pharmacy program in Hong Kong. However, this finding contradicts Reus's (2020) showing that performance differences are primarily attributable to students' performance in previous courses, and language, gender, and attendance have limited influence that explains such performance differences. The findings of the current study show that language and gender explain significant differences in performance, as indicated by students' CGPA.

The content instructors' opinions were presented as methods, detailed views, and a summary. We can infer from the content instructors' summary that most have positive attitudes toward and experiences with EME undergraduate programs. Surprisingly, this contradicts Alhamami's (2015) findings. Alhamami (2015) found that most Arab scientists support the use of Arabic in undergraduate programs. One explanation for this is that the current questionnaire included non-Arabic content instructors and was in English, whereas Alhamami's (2015) questionnaire was limited to Arabic native-speaking scientists and was written in Arabic. In addition, the current questionnaire included content instructors from different academic disciplines, such as engineering, computers, medicine, and science. Alhamami's (2015) questionnaire was limited to the College of Science. Abouzeid (2021) concluded that the EME policy and curriculum design reconciled instructors' perceptions with the reality of their

students' linguistic proficiency and learning needs. Research has also indicated that EME teachers need professional development to teach effectively (Macaro et al., 2020).

The three constructs of Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (attitude, normative beliefs, and self-efficacy) correlate significantly with each other. Based on the students' attitude mean ($m = 4.25$), the students had a negative attitude toward learning content in EME undergraduate programs. The students also had negative Self-efficacy beliefs, as indicated by the mean of their Self-efficacy ($m = 4.21$). Interestingly, students believe that important people around them hold negative beliefs about the use of the EME policy to learn content, as indicated by the mean score of their normative beliefs construct ($M = 4.31$). Negative social pressure and the opinions of people around students influence their intention to learn content in EME programs and participate in class activities (Alhamami, 2020). In addition, negative Self-efficacy beliefs contribute to engagement inside the class. Thompson et al. (2019) stressed that students with weak self-efficacy beliefs will not put forth more effort.

The finding for the two-point Likert scale that measures students' preferred medium of education shows that students prefer to learn content in their mother tongue, Arabic. Seventy-two percent of the students believed that they would have better GPAs if they used Arabic as a medium of education. Moreover, 88% of the participants believed that English hindered their performance in exams and prevented them from understanding and answering questions. In addition, 78% of the participants chose to learn content in Arabic. The participants showed major concerns regarding their GPA and performance on exams. This shows that there are challenges posed by the transition from secondary education (K12) to university in relation to EME. Arabic is the medium of education for all subjects. This contradicts the findings by Rose et al. (2020), who found that Japanese students believed that the benefits they gained from the EME program were more important than their GPA.

There was a statistically significant interaction effect between gender and survey answers regarding dependent variables: Female participants showed higher negative attitude, normative beliefs, and Self-efficacy toward the EME policy, as indicated by their higher means in all three constructs. One explanation is that female students are concerned about their education and would like to achieve higher GPAs. Achieving higher GPAs will increase their opportunities to get a job because many Saudi government agencies take into consideration students' GPAs when they apply for a position. In addition, a higher GPA will increase their opportunities to join higher graduate programs. However, these findings contradict Kong and Wei (2019), who found positive attitudes toward the EME policy. The participants reported slightly favorable attitudes toward EME.

There was a statistically significant interaction effect between students' preferred medium of education and survey answers on dependent variables: Participants who chose Arabic had higher negative views toward the EME policy, as indicated by their higher means in all three of Ajzen's theory constructs. Students with higher negative beliefs regarding the EME policy preferred Arabic. However, content instructors held different perspectives than students (Alhamami & Almelhi, 2021). Content instructors' attitudes toward students' English proficiency in EME can explain different behaviors in EME classes, such as students' participation in class discussions and written answers in exam papers. The findings demonstrated the usefulness of Ajzen's theory of planned behavior in understanding the EME

context. The three main constructs in Ajzen's theory, attitude, normative beliefs, and self-efficacy, proved to be useful in showing differences between students' genders and preferred medium of education and their attitude, normative beliefs, and self-efficacy. Designing research tools based on Ajzen's theory will help EME researchers develop more valid and reliable research tools.

In EME programs, educators and policymakers should examine factors that influence students' achievement of program learning outcomes such as the medium of education. Policymakers should reduce the external factors that increase equality in the programs, such as proficiency in the medium of education, access to educational resources, and family financial status. For example, in Mathematics programs, administrators should ask whether the students earn a higher GPA because they have achieved the program's outcomes OR because the students speak English more fluently than others. It is recommended that program administrators should provide students with low English proficiency with more English learning courses before they enroll in EME programs. Having more English learning courses will allow students just and fair treatment once they enroll in EME programs.

Content instructors should be trained to differentiate between students' ability and their proficiency in English. For example, physics, mathematics, and engineering exams have given advantages to students who speak English fluently over those who have limited English proficiency. There should be an exam control committee that revises exams for validity and confirm whether these exams are influenced by external factors such as higher proficiency in English. It is recommended that content instructors in EME programs complete courses on assessment and evaluation. Having trained instructors on assessment and evaluation will increase students' opportunities for fair and just assessment. Content instructors are important stakeholders and their views should be elicited and considered while designing curriculums. Program administrators should conduct an analysis survey to elicit all content instructors' needs in EME programs.

The results of the students also suggest that EME program administrators need to consider students' genders, attitudes, self-efficacy, and social beliefs while designing new programs and updating current EME programs. Students are important stakeholders and their backgrounds should be considered while designing programs. Students with negative attitudes, low self-efficacy beliefs, and negative social beliefs toward English might not engage and enjoy learning in EME classes. Bilingual policy or providing two-track programs in English and in Arabic will give students the opportunity to choose their preferred medium of education. Teachers also can code-switch and use students' mother tongue to help them understand complex concepts and different terms. In addition, instructors might allow students to code-switch and use their mother tongue in EME programs if they cannot express themselves in English. Code-switching and bilingual policy will increase equal opportunities to learn and perform on exams.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of EME on students' academic performance and attitudes, as well as content instructors' perspectives. The findings revealed that alumni with higher English proficiency achieved better learning outcomes. Students face many challenges posed by the transition from secondary education (K12) to university in relation to EME, as

indicated by their negative attitude, normative beliefs, and Self-efficacy beliefs. Students' gender is an important factor in the Saudi context in relation to CGPA and beliefs regarding EME policy. Female alumni have higher CGPAs, and female current students have higher negative beliefs regarding the EME policy. The content instructors' survey indicated generally positive views of students' English language proficiency, indirectly reflecting favorable attitudes toward the EME policy.

EME in Saudi undergraduate programs is an emerging field of research. There is a need for further comparative research that compares the findings in different Saudi contexts, such as undergraduate and graduate programs, private and public universities, and international and local high schools. There is also a need to compare the views of content instructors and students' gender in Saudi universities with those of other countries. Comparing the two countries using the same instruments reveals interesting findings. Future studies might use qualitative methods to investigate in depth the resources for students' negative attitude, normative beliefs, and Self-efficacy in undergraduate Saudi programs.

The findings of this study demonstrate the substantial impact of the EME policy on content learning. Students with higher English proficiency achieved better learning outcomes. Contradicting views of the EME policy on content instructors' and students' questionnaires demonstrate the need for content instructors' training and awareness of challenges that students face in EME programs. The students' questionnaire shows that students face many challenges posed by the transition from secondary education (K12) to university in relation to EME, as indicated by their negative attitude, normative beliefs, and Self-efficacy beliefs. Students' gender is an important factor in the Saudi context in relation to CGPA and beliefs regarding EME policy. Female alumni have higher CGPAs, and female current students have higher negative beliefs regarding the EME policy.

The present study has the following limitations. First, it used homogenous sample where students speak the same native language (Arabic). Future studies may replicate the findings of this study with a heterogeneous sample of students coming from different backgrounds and speaking different mother tongues. Second, this study is limited to undergraduate programs. Future studies may compare the findings to postgraduate programs. Content instructors and students in Master's degree programs and Ph.D. programs might have different perspectives than undergraduate programs. Third, this study only considered single-sex EME programs, also known as gender-isolated education. In Saudi universities, males and females attend classes on separate campuses and are taught by the same gender. Male instructors are not allowed to enter female campuses. Future studies may replicate this study with mixed-gender classes where they are taught by both male and female instructors.

Acknowledgements & Funding

The author extends his appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Khalid University for funding this work through General Research Project under grant number (G.R.P-170-43). This work was supported by King Khalid University [grant number G.R.P- 170-43]

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